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A G I N C O U R T.

A ROMANCE.

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“DARNLEY,” “DE L’ORME,” “ARABELLA STUART,”
“ROSE D’ALBRET,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1844.

LONDON :

Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLEY,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

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AGINCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

THE NIGHT RIDE.

THE night was as black as ink ; not a solitary twinkling star looked out through that wide expanse of shadow, which our great Poet has called the “blanket of the dark ;” clouds covered the heaven ; the moon had not risen to tinge them even with grey, and the sun had too long set to leave one faint streak of purple upon the edge of the western sky. Trees, houses, villages, fields, and gardens, all lay in one profound obscurity, and even the course of the high-road itself required eyes well accustomed to night-travelling to be able to distinguish it, as it wandered on through a rich

part of Hampshire, amidst alternate woods and meadows. Yet at that murky hour, a traveller on horseback rode forward upon his way, at an easy pace, and with a light heart, if one might judge by the snatches of homely ballads that broke from his lips as he trotted on. These might, indeed, afford a fallacious indication of what was going on within the breast, and in his case they did so ; for habit is more our master than we know, and often rules our external demeanour, whenever the spirit is called to take council in the deep chambers within, showing upon the surface, without any effort on our part to hide our thoughts, a very different aspect from that of the mind's business at the moment.

Thus, then, the traveller who there rode along, saluting the ear of night with scraps of old songs, sung in a low, but melodious voice, was as thoughtful, if not as sad, as it was in his nature to be ; but yet, as that nature was a cheerful one and all his habits were gay, no sooner were the eyes of the spirit called to the consideration of deeper things, than custom exercised her sway over the animal part, and

he gave voice, as we have said, to the old ballads which had cheered his boyhood and his youth.

Whatever were his contemplations, they were interrupted, just as he came to a small stream which crossed the road and then wandered along at its side, by first hearing the quick foot-falls of a horse approaching, and then a loud, but fine voice, exclaiming, “Who goes there?”

“A friend to all true men,” replied the traveller; “a foe to all false knaves. ‘Merry sings the throstle under the thorn.’ Which be you, friend of the highway?”

“Faith, I hardly know,” replied the stranger; “every man is a bit of both, I believe. But if you can tell me my way to Winchester, I will give you thanks.”

“I want nothing more,” answered the first traveller, drawing in his rein. “But Winchester!—Good faith, that is a long way off; and you are going from it, master:” and he endeavoured, as far as the darkness would permit, to gain some knowledge of the stranger’s ap-

pearance. It seemed that of a young man of good proportions, tall and slim, but with broad shoulders and long arms. He wore no cloak, and his dress fitting tight to his body, as was the fashion of the day, allowed his interlocutor to perceive the unencumbered outline of his figure.

“A long way off!” said the second traveller, as his new acquaintance gazed at him; “that is very unlucky; but all my stars are under that black cloud. What is to be done now, I wonder?”

“What do you want to do?” inquired the first traveller. “Winchester is distant five and twenty miles or more.”

“Odds life! I want to find somewhere to lodge me and my horse for a night,” replied the other, “at a less distance than twenty-five miles, and yet not quite upon this very spot.”

“Why not Andover?” asked his companion; “’tis but six miles, and I am going thither.”

“Humph!” said the stranger, in a tone not quite satisfied; “it must be so, if better cannot be found; and yet, my friend, I would fain

find some other lodging. Is there no inn hard by, where carriers bait their beasts and fill their bellies, and country folks carouse on nights of merry-making? or some old hall or goodly castle, where a truckle bed, or one of straw, a nunchion of bread and cheese, and a draught of ale, is not likely to be refused to a traveller with a good coat on his back and long-toed shoes?"

"Oh, ay!" rejoined the first; "of the latter there are many round, but, on my life, it will be difficult to direct you to them. The men of this part have a fondness for crooked ways, and, unless you were the Dædalus who made them or had some fair dame to guide you by the clue, you might wander about for as many hours as would take you to Winchester."

"Then Andover it must be, I suppose," answered the other; "though, to say sooth, I may there have to pay for a frolic, the score of which might better be reckoned with other men than myself."

"A frolic?" said his companion; "nothing more, my friend?"

“No, on my life!” replied the other; “a survy frolic, such as only a fool would commit; but when a man has nothing else to do, he is sure to fall into folly, and I am idle perforce.”

“Well, I’ll believe you,” answered the first, after a moment’s thought: “I have, thank Heaven, the gift of credulity, and believe all that men tell me. Come, I will turn back with you, and guide you to a place of rest, though I shall be well laughed at for my pains.”

“Not for an act of generous courtesy, surely,” said the stranger, quitting the half-jesting tone in which he had hitherto spoken. “If they laugh at you for that, I care not to lodge with them, and will not put your kindness to the test, for I should look for a cold reception.”

“Nay, nay, ’tis not for that, they will laugh,” rejoined the other, “and perhaps it may jump with my humour to go back, too. If you have committed a folly in a frolic to-night, I have committed one in anger. Come with me, therefore, and, as we go, give me some name by which to call you when we arrive, that I

may not have to throw you into my uncle's hall as a keeper with a dead deer ; and, moreover, before we go, give me your word that we have no frolics here, for I would not, for much, that any one I brought, should move the old knight's heart with aught but pleasure."

" There is my hand, good youth," replied the stranger, following, as the other turned his horse ; " and I never break my word, whatever men say of me, though they tell strange tales. As for my name, people call me Hal of Hadnock ; it will do as well as another."

" For the nonce," added his companion, understanding well that it was assumed ; " but it matters not. Let us ride on, and the gate shall soon be opened to you ; for I do think they will be glad to see me back again, though I may not perchance stay long.

' The porter rose anon certaine
As soon as he heard John call.' "

" You seem learned for a countryman," said the traveller, riding on by his side ; " but, perchance, I am speaking to a clerk ? "

" Good faith, no," replied the first way-

farer, “ more soldier than clerk, Hal of Haddonock; as old Robert of Langland says, ‘ I cannot perfectly my Paternoster, as the priest it singeth, but I can rhyme of Robin Hode and Randof Earl of Chester.’ I have cheered my boyhood with many a song and my youth with many a ballad. When lying in the field upon the marches of Wales, I have whiled away many a cold night with the

‘ Quens Mountfort, sa dure mort,’

or,

‘ Richard of Alemaigne, while he was king,’

and then in the cold blasts of March, I ever found comfort in

‘ Summer is ieumen in,
Lhude sing eucu,
Groweth sede and bloweth mede,
And springeth the wode nu.’ ”

“ And good reason too,” said Hal of Haddonock, “ I do the same i’faith; and when wintry winds are blowing, I think ever, that a warmer day may come and all be bright again. Were it not for that, indeed, I might well be cold-hearted.”

“ Fie, never flinch ! ” cried his gay companion ; “ there is but one thing on earth should make a bold man cold-hearted.”

“ And what may that be ? ” asked the other ; “ to lose his dinner ? ”

“ No, good life ! ” exclaimed the first,—“ to lose his lady’s love.”

“ Ay, is it there the saddle galls ? ” said Hal of Hadnock.

“ Faith not a whit,” answered his fellow traveller ; “ if it did, I should leave off singing. You are wrong in your guess, Master Hal. I may lose my lady, but not my lady’s love, or I am much mistaken ; and while that stays with me I will both sing and hope.”

“ ’Tis the best comfort,” replied Hal of Hadnock, “ and generally brings success. But what am I to call you, fair sir ? for it mars one’s speech to have no name for a companion.”

“ Now, were not my uncle’s house within three miles,” said the other, “ I would pay you in your own coin, and bid you call me Dick of Andover ; for I am fond of secrets, and keep them faithfully, except when they are

likely to be found out ; but such being the case now, you must call me Richard of Woodville, if you would have my friends know you mean a poor squire who has ever sought the places where hard blows are plenty ; but who missed his spurs at Bramham Moor by being sent by his good friend Sir Thomas Rokeby to bear tidings of Northumberland's incursion to the King. I would fain have staid and carried news of the victory ; but good sooth, Sir Thomas said he could trust me to tell the truth clearly as well as fight, and that, though he could trust the others to fight, he could not find one who would not make the matter either more or less to the king, than it really was. See what bad luck it is to be a plain-spoken fellow."

"Good luck as well as bad," replied Hal of Hadnock ; and in such conversation they pursued their way, riding not quite so fast as either had been doing when first they met, and slackening their pace to a walk when, about half a mile farther forward, they quitted the high road and took to the narrow lanes of the country, which, as the reader may easily con-

ceive, were not quite as good for travelling in those days, as even at present, when in truth they are often bad enough. They soon issued forth, however, upon a more open track, where the river again ran along by the roadside, sheltered here and there by copses which occasionally rose from the very brink; and, just as they regained it, the moon appearing over the low banks that fell crossing each other over its course, poured, from beneath the fringe of heavy clouds that canopied the sky above, her full pale light upon the whole extent of the stream. There was something fine but melancholy in the sight, grave and even grand; and though there were none of those large objects which seem generally necessary to produce the sublime, there was a feeling of vastness given by the broad expanse of shadow overhead and the long line of glistening brightness below, broken by the thick black masses of brushwood that here and there bent over the flat surface of the water.

“This is fine,” said Hal of Hadnock. “I love such night scenes with the solitary moon

and the deep woods and the gleaming river—ay, even the dark clouds themselves. They are to me like a king's fate, where so many heavy things brood over him, so many black and impenetrable things surround him, and where yet often a clear yet cold effulgence pours upon his way, grander and calmer than the warmer and gayer beams that fall upon the course of ordinary men."

His companion turned and gazed at him for a moment by the moonlight, but made no observation, till the other continued pointing with his hand, "What is that drifting on the water? Surely 'tis a man's head!"

"An otter with a trout in his mouth, speeding to his hole," replied Richard of Woodville; "he will not be long in sight.—See! he is gone. All things fly from man. We have established our character for butchery with the brute creation; and they wisely avoid the slaughter-house of our presence."

"I thought it was something human, living or dead," replied Hal of Hadnock. "Methinks it were a likely spot for a man to rid himself of

his enemy, and give the carrion to the waters ; or for a love-lorn damsel to bury griefs and memories beneath the sleepy shining of the moonlight stream. The Leucadian promontory was an awful leap, and bold as well as sad must have been the heart to take it ; but here, timid despair might creep quietly into the soft closing wave, and find a more peaceful death-bed than the slow decay of a broken-heart."

" Sad thoughts, sir, sad thoughts," replied Richard of Woodville, " and yet you seemed merry enough just now."

" Ay, the fit comes upon me as it will, comrade," replied the other, " and good faith I strive not to prevent it. I amuse myself with my own humours, standing, as it were, without myself, and looking inward like a spectator at a tournay, now laughing at all I see, now ready to weep ; and yet for the world I would not stop the scene, were it in my power to cast down my warder at the keenest point of strife, and say, ' Pause ! no more ! ' Sometimes there lives not a merrier heart on this side the sea, and sometimes not a sadder within the waters. At one

time I could laugh like a clown at a fair, and at others, would make ballads to the little stars, full of sad homilies."

"Not so, I," rejoined Richard of Woodville. "I strive for an equal mind. I would fain be always light-hearted; and though, when I am crossed, I may be hot and hasty, ready to strive with others or myself, yet, in good truth, I soon learn to bear with all things, and to endure the ills that fall to my portion, as lightly as may be. Man's a beast of burden, and must carry his pack-saddle; so it is better to do it quietly than to kick under the load. Out upon those who go seeking for sorrows, a sort of commodity they may find at their own door! One whines over man's ingratitude; another takes to heart the scorn of the great; another broods over his merit neglected, and his good deeds forgotten; but, were they wise, and did good without thought of thanks—were they high of heart and knew themselves as great in their inmost soul, as the greatest in the land—were they bright in mind, and found pleasure in the mind's exercise, they would both

merit more and repine less ; ay, and be surer of their due in the end."

" By my life, you said you were no clerk, Richard of Woodville," cried his companion, " and here you have preached me a sermon, fit to banish moon-sick melancholy from the land. But say, good youth, is yonder light looking out of your uncle's hall window ?—There, far on the other side of the stream ?"

" No no," answered Woodville, " ride after it, and see how far it will lead you. You will soon find yourself neck deep in the swamp. 'Tis a Will-o'-the-wisp. My uncle's house lies on before, beyond the village of Abbot's Ann, just a quarter of a mile from the Abbey ; so, as the one brother owns the hall, and the other rules the monastery, they can aid and countenance each other, whether it be at a merry-making or a broil. Then too, as the good Abbot is as meek as an ewe in a May morning, and Sir Philip is as fiery as the sun in June, the one can tame the other's wrath or work up his courage, as the case may be ; but here we see the first houses—and lights

in the window, too ! Why, how now ? Dame Julien has not gone to bed ; but, I forgot, there is a glutton mass to-morrow, and as the reeve's wife, she must be cooking capons truly. But hark ! there is a sound of a eithern, and some one singing. Good faith they are making merry by their fire-side, though curfew has tolled long since. Well, Heaven send all good men a cheerful evening and a happy hearth ! Perhaps they have some poor minstrel within, and are keeping up his heart with kindness ; for Julien is a bountiful dame, and the reeve, though somewhat hard upon the young knaves, is no way pinched when there is a sad face at his door. Well, fair sir, we shall soon be home.—A pleasant place, is home ; ay, it is a pleasant place, and when far away, we think of it always. God help the man who has no home ! and let all good Christians befriend him, for he has need."

Although Hal of Hadnock made no farther observations upon his companion's mood and character, there was something therein that struck and pleased him greatly ; and he was

no mean judge of his fellow men, for he had mingled with many of every class and degree. Quick and ready in discovering, by small traits, the secrets of that complicated mystery, the human heart, he saw even in the love of music and poetry, in a man habituated to camps and fields of battle, a higher and finer mind than the common society of the day afforded ; for it must not be thought, that either in the knight, or the knight's son, of our old friend Chaucer, the poet gave an accurate picture of the gentry of the age. That there were such, is not to be doubted ; but they were few ; and the generality of the nobles and gentlemen of those times, were sadly illiterate and rude. The occasional words Richard of Woodville let drop, too, regarding his own scheme of home philosophy, showed, his companion thought, a strength and vigour of character which might be serviceable to others as well as himself, in any good and honourable cause ; and Hal of Hadnock, as they rode on, said to himself, " I will see more of this man."

After passing through the little village, and

issuing out again into the open country, they saw by the light of the moon, now rising higher and dispersing the clouds as she advanced, a high isolated hill standing out, detached from all the woods and scattered hedge-rows round. At a little distance from its base, upon the left, appeared the tall pinnacles and tower of an abbey and a church, cutting dark against the lustrous sky behind ; and, partly hidden by the trees on the right, partly rising above them, were seen the bold lines of another building in a sterner style of architecture.

“ That is your uncle’s dwelling, I suppose,” said Hal of Hadnock, pointing on with his hand. “ Shall we find any one up ? It is hard upon ten o’clock.”

“ Oh, no fear,” replied Richard of Woodville. “ Good Sir Philip Beauchamp sits late in the hall. He will not take his white head to the pillow for an hour or two ; and the ladies like well to keep him company. Here, to the left, is a shorter way through the wood ;—but look to your horse’s footing, for the woodmen were busy this morning, and may have left branches about.”

In less than five minutes more they were before the embattled gates of one of those old English dwellings, half castle, half house, which denoted the owner to be a man of station and consideration—just a step below, in fortune or rank, those mighty barons who sheltered themselves from the storms of a factious and lawless epoch, in fortresses filled with an army of retainers and dependants. As they approached, Richard of Woodville raised his voice and called aloud,

“ Tim Morris ! Tim Morris ! ” He waited a moment, singing to himself the two verses he had repeated before,

“ ‘ The porter rose again certaine
As soon as he heard John call ; ’ ”

and then added, “ But it will be different now, I fancy ; for honest Tim is as deaf as a miller, and his boy is sound asleep, I suspect.—Tim Morris, I say !—He will keep us here all night,—Tim Morris !—How now, old sluggard ? ” he continued, as the ancient porter rolled back the gate ; “ were you snoring in your wicker-chair,

that you make us dance attendance, as you do the country folk of a Monday morning?"

" 'Tis fit they should learn to dance the Morris dance, as they call it, Master Dick," answered the porter, laughing and holding up his lantern. " God yield ye, sir. I thought you were gone for the night, and I was stripping off my jerkin."

" Is Simeon of Roydon gone, then?" asked Woodville.

" Nay, sir ; he stays all night," answered the porter. " Here, boy ; here, knave ; turn thee out, and run across the court to take the horses."

A sleepy boy, with senses yet but half awake, crept out from the door, and followed Richard of Woodville and his companion as they rode across the small space that separated the gate from the Hall itself. There, at a flight of steps, leading to a portal which might well have served a church, they dismounted ; and, advancing before his fellow traveller, Richard of Woodville raised the heavy bar of hammered iron, which served for a latch, and entered the hall, singing aloud,

“‘ As I rode on a Monday
Between Wettenden and Wall,
All along the broad way,
I met a little man withal.’”

As he spoke he pushed back the door for Hal of Hadnock to enter, and a scene was presented to his companion’s sight, which deserves rather to begin than end a chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE HALL AND ITS DENIZENS.

THE hall of the old house at Dunbury,—long swept away by the two great destroyers of man's works, Time and Change,—was a spacious vaulted chamber, of about sixty feet in its entire length, by from thirty-five to forty in width ; but, at the end next the court, a part of the pavement, of about nine feet broad, and some eighteen or twenty inches lower than the rest, was separated from the hall by two broad steps running all the way across. This inferior space presented three doors ; the great one communicating at once with the court, and two others in the angles, at the right side and the left, leading to chambers in the rest of the building. At the further end of the hall, on the left, was another small door, opposite to which there appeared the first four steps of a staircase,

which wound away with a turn to apartments above. There was a high window over the principal entrance, from which the room received, in the day-time, its only light ; and about half way up the chamber, on the left hand, was the wide chimney and hearth, with seats on either side, and two vast bars of iron between them for burning wood. In the midst of the pavement, stood a long table with some benches, one or two stools, and a great chair, in which the master of the mansion seated himself at the time of meals ; but the hall presented no other ornament whatever, except a number of lances, bows, cross-bows, axes, maces, and other offensive arms, which were ranged with some taste against the walls. The armoury was in another part of the house, and these weapons seemed only admitted here to be ready in case of immediate need ; for those were times in which men did not always know how soon the hand might be called upon to defend the head.

When Richard of Woodville and his companion entered, some six or seven large logs, I might almost call them trees, were blazing on

the hearth ; and, in addition to the glare they afforded, a sconce of seven burners above the chimney shed a full light upon the party assembled round the fire. That party was very numerous, for several maids and retainers, of whom it may not be necessary to speak more particularly, were scattered round the principal personages, busy with such occupations for the evening as were common in a rude age when intellectual pursuits were very little cultivated.

The group in front, however, deserves more attention, consisting of seven persons, most of whom we shall have to speak of more than once in the course of these pages. In the seat within the chimney, just opposite the door, sat the master of the mansion, a tall powerful old man, who had seen many a battle-field in his day, during that and the preceding reign, and had borne away the marks of hard blows upon his face. He was spare and large-boned in form, with his hair and beard* very nearly white ; but

* The beard was, at this time, usually shaved off by the English nobles ; but many of the older barons still retained it, and I find the mustachio very frequently in contemporaneous representations of younger knights.

he was hale and florid withal, and his countenance, though strongly marked, had an expression of kindness and good-humour, not at all incompatible with the indications of a quick and fiery temper, which were to be discovered in the sparkle of his undimmed blue eye and the sudden contraction of his brow, when anything surprised him. The seat on the other side of the fire was not visible from the door by which the two way-farers entered ; but beyond the angle of the chimney, protruded into the light, the arm, shoulder, and part of the head of another tall old man, apparently clothed in the grey gown of some monastic order.

On the left of Sir Philip Beauchamp was seated a young lady, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age, with her arm resting on his knee, and her head and figure bent gracefully towards him. Her hair was as black as jet, her skin soft and clear, and her complexion somewhat pale, though a slight tinge of the rose might be seen upon her cheek. Her eyes, like her father's, were of a deep clear blue, though the long black fringes that bordered her

eyelids in a long sweeping line, made them, at a distance, look as dark as her hair. She seemed neither above nor below the ordinary height of woman ; and her whole figure, though by no means thin, was slim and delicate. The small exquisite foot and rounded ankle inclining gracefully towards the fire, were displayed by the posture in which she had placed herself ; and the hand that rested on her father's knee, with long fingers tapering to the point, showed in every line the high Norman blood of her race.

Next to Isabel Beauchamp, the only daughter of the old knight, was another lady, perhaps a year younger. She was in several respects strikingly contrasted to her fair companion, though hardly less beautiful. Her hair was of a light glossy brown, catching a warm gleam wherever the light fell upon it, as fine as silk new spun from the cone, yet curling in large bunches wherever it could escape from the bands that confined it. Her complexion was fair and glowing; her cheek warm with health, and her skin as soft and smooth as that of a child. To look upon her at a little distance one would have ex-

pected to find the merry grey or blue eye, so often seen in the pretty village maid, but hers was dark-brown, large, and full, and soft, yet with a laughing light therein that seemed to speak a buoyant and a happy heart. In form she was somewhat taller than the other; but though her waist looked as if it would have required no giant's hand to span it round, yet there was that sort of full and graceful sweep in all the lines, which painters and statuaries, I believe, call *contour*. Nought but the tip of one foot was seen from beneath the long and flowing petticoat then in fashion; but even from that, one might judge that nothing much more neat and small ever beat the turf, except amongst the elves of fairy land. Her hand rested upon a frame of embroidery, at which she had been working, and her head was slightly bent forward, as if to hear something said by the good Abbot of the convent, who sat opposite to his brother, in the seat within the chimney. But between her and him, was another group, consisting of three persons, which somewhat detached itself from the rest. Two were seated, a lady and a gentle-

man, and the third was standing with his arms folded on his chest a little behind the others.

The backs of these three were turned towards the door by which Woodville and his companion entered ; and they were somewhat in the shade, being placed between the lower end of the hall and the light both of the fire and the sconce ; but as we are now looking at the picture of the whole, we may as well examine the details before we proceed.

The lady bore a striking resemblance in features, complexion, and form, to Isabel Beau-champ, whom we have already described ; and the Lady Catherine might well be taken, as was often the case, for her cousin's sister. She was taller, indeed, though not much ; but the chief difference was in the expression of the two countenances. Catherine's wanted all the gentleness, the tenderness, the thoughtfulness, of Isabel's. It could assume a look of playful coquetry, it could seem grave, it could seem joyous ; but with each expression there mingled a touch of pride, perhaps, too, of vanity ; and a scornful turn of the lip and well-chiseled nostril, as well

as a quick flash of the eye, spoke the rash and haughty spirit which too certainly dwelt within her breast.

We are the slaves of circumstances from our cradle ; and the mother and the nurse form as much part of our fate, as any of the other events which mould our character, guide our course, and lead us to high station, retain us in mediocrity, or plunge us into misfortune. Catherine Beau-champ, like her cousin, was an only child, and an heiress ; but her mother had brought large possessions to her father, and with those large possessions an inexhaustible store of pride. She had looked upon herself, indeed, as her husband's benefactor, for he was a younger brother, of small estate ; and, after his death, she and a foolish servant had rivalled each other in instilling into her daughter's mind high notions of her own importance. In this, as in many another thing, the mother had proved herself weak ; and the spoilt child had early shown her the result of her own folly. She did not live long enough to correct her error, even if she had possessed sense enough to make the effort ; and when Cathe-

rine came to the house of her uncle, as his ward, her character was too far fixed to render any lessons effectual, but the severe ones of the world. There, then, she sat, beautiful, rich, vain, and haughty, claiming all admiration as her due, and believing that even her faults ought to be admired for her loveliness and her wealth.

Beside her was placed her mother's nearest relation, a distant cousin, named Simeon of Roydon. He was a tall, robust, well-proportioned man of two or three and thirty years of age, with a quantity of light hair close cut in front, and left long upon the back of the head and over the temples. His features were in general good ; and what with youth and health, a florid complexion, fair skin, bright keen eyes, an aquiline nose, somewhat too much depressed, and an air of calm self-importance and courtly ease, he was the sort of man so often called handsome by those who little consider or know in what beauty really consists. Nothing, indeed, that dress could do, was left undone, according to the fashions of the day, to set off his person to the best of advantage. His long limbs were

clothed in the light-coloured breeches and hose, without division from the waist to the foot, which were then generally worn by men of the higher class ; but so tightly did they fit, that scarce a muscle of the leg might not be traced beneath ; and his coat was also cut so close to his shape, that except on the chest, where perhaps some padding added to the appearance of breadth, the garment seemed to be but an outer skin. His shoes exhibited points of at least six inches in length beyond the toe ; and the sleeves of his mantle, which he continued to wear even in the hall, hung down till they swept the floor. He wore a dagger in his girdle with a jeweled hilt, and a clasp upon his coat with a ruby set in gold ; while on his thumb appeared a large signet-ring of a very peculiar fashion and device.

Notwithstanding dress, however, and good features, and a countenance under perfect command, there were certain minute, but very distinct signs, to be perceived by an eye practised in the study of the human character, which betrayed the fact, that his smooth exterior was but a shell containing a less pleasant

core. There was a wandering of the eyes which did not always seem to move in the same orbits ; there was an occasional quiver of the lower lip, as if words which might be dangerous were restrained with difficulty ; there was a look of keen, eager, almost fierce enquiry when anything was said, the meaning of which he did not at once comprehend ; and then a sudden return to a bland and sweet expression almost of insipidity, which spoke of something false and hollow. He was talking to Catherine Beauchamp, when Richard of Woodville and Hal of Hadnock entered, in gay tones, often mingling a low laugh with his conversation, and eyeing his own foot and leg as it was stretched out towards the fire, with an air of great self-admiration and satisfaction.

The figure of the third person, who stood close behind the lady—as if he had come round thither and left vacant a stool which appeared on the other side, to take part in her conversation with Sir Simeon of Roydon—was as tall and finer in all its proportions than that of the knight who sat by her side. His chest was broader ;

his arms more muscular ; the turn of his head, and the fall of his shoulders more graceful and symetrical. His dark hair curled short round his forehead and on his neck ; his straight-cut features of a grave and somewhat stern cast, wore their least pleasing look when in repose ; for they wanted but the fire of expression to light them up in a moment, and render them all bright and glowing. His eye, however, the feature which soonest receives that light, had in it a fixed melancholy which scarcely even left it when he smiled ; and now, though he had come round thither to interchange a few words with Catherine, his betrothed wife, and her gay kinsman, Sir Henry Dacre had fallen into thought again, and remained standing with his arms folded on his chest, and his look fixed upon Isabel Beauchamp as she leaned upon her father's knee. His gaze was intense, thoughtful—I might call it enquiring ; but yet it was not rude, for he knew not that his eyes were so firmly fixed upon her. He was buried in his own thoughts ; and perhaps the peculiar investigating expression of that look, might be

accounted for by supposing that he was asking questions, difficult to solve, of his own heart.

Isabel herself did not remark that he was gazing at her, for she was listening to some anecdote of other days which her father was telling. But the old knight did observe the glance of his young friend, and he observed it with pain ; yet “ more in sorrow than in anger ; ” for there were some things for which he bitterly grieved, but which could not be amended. He broke off his story for a moment to mutter to himself, “ Poor fellow ! ” and just at that instant, his eye lighted upon Richard Woodville as the young traveller opened the great door of the hall. His brow contracted, while perhaps one might count ten, but was speedily clear again, and he exclaimed laughing loud, “ Ha ! here is Dickon again ! I thought he would not go far.”

Every one turned round suddenly ; and all laughed gaily except one. But the fair girl with the rich brown hair sitting next to Isabel Beauchamp, gazed down the hall, with a smile indeed, but with a kindly look gleaming forth through her half-closed merry eyes.

“ Ah, run-away !” cried Isabel Beauchamp, still laughing ; “ so you have come back ?”

“ Yes, sweet cousin,” replied Richard of Woodville, advancing up the hall with his companion ; “ but I have a cause. I should have been half way to Winchester else.—Here is a gentleman, sir,” he continued, addressing his uncle, “ whom I have met seeking the right way, and finding the wrong ; and I failed not in promising him your hospitality for the night.”

“ Right, Richard, you did right,” replied the old knight, raising his tall form from the seat by the fire.—“ Sir, you are most welcome. Quick, Hugh of Clatford, leave cutting that bow, and speed to the buttery and the kitchen. Bid them bring wine and meat. I pray you, sir, take the seat by the fire.”

“ Nay, not so, noble sir,” replied Hal of Hadnock in a courteous tone. “ I am not one to take the place of venerable years and high renown. Thanks for your welcome, and good fortune to your roof tree. I beseech you let me make no confusion. I will place me here,”

and he drew a stool from the table, somewhat nearer to the fire, and seated himself, while all eyes were fixed upon him.

Richard of Woodville, too, took a better view of his companion than he had hitherto obtained, and that view satisfied him that he had not introduced to his uncle's hall a guest who, in point of rank and station at least, was not well deserving of a place therein.

The stranger was, as I have already said, a tall and somewhat slim young man, perhaps four or five and twenty years of age, with black hair and close-shaved beard, keen dark eyes, long and sinewy limbs, and a chest of great width and depth. His features were remarkably fine, his brow wide and expansive, his forehead high, and the whole expression of his countenance noble and commanding. His dress was rich and costly, without being gaudy. His coat of deep brown, covering the hips like that of a crossbowman, was of the finest cloth, and ornamented with small lines of gold in a quaint but not ungraceful pattern. Instead of the hood, then commonly worn, his head was covered with

a small cap of velvet, and one long pennache, or feather, clasped with a large jewel ; his dagger and the hilt of his sword were both studded with rubies, and though his riding-boots of untanned leather were cut square off at the toe, instead of being encumbered with the long points still in fashion, over them were buckled, with a broad strap and flap, a pair of gilt spurs, showing that he had seen service in arms, and had won knightly rank. His tight-fitting hose were of a light philimot, or brownish yellow, colour, and round the leg below the knee was a mark as if the impression of a thong, seeming to prove that when not in riding attire, he was accustomed to wear shoes so long, that the horns points were obliged to be fastened up by a gilt chain, as was then not unusual. His manner was highly courteous ; but it was remarked, that at first he committed what has, in most ages, been considered an act of rudeness, remaining with his head covered some minutes after he entered the hall. But at length seeming suddenly to remember that such was the case, he took off his cap and laid it on the table.

Sir Philip Beauchamp, without asking any question of his guest, proceeded at once to name to him the different persons assembled round the fire ; but as we have already heard who they were, it is needless to give a recapitulation here. Richard of Woodville, however, marked or fancied, that as the old knight pronounced the name of Sir Simeon of Roydon, a brief glance of recognition passed between that personage and his companion of the road ; but neither claimed the other as an acquaintance ; and Woodville said nothing to call attention to what he had observed.

“ It will seem scarcely courteous, sir,” said the guest, as Sir Philip ended, “ not to give you my own name, though you in your hospitality will not ask it ; but yet for the present, I will beg you to call me simply Hal of Hadnock ; and ere I go, Sir Philip, to your own ear I will tell more ; and now pray let me not kill mirth, or break off a pleasant tale, or stop a sweet lay ; for doubtless you pass the long eves of March, as did the knights and dames in our old friend Chaucer’s dreams.

“ ‘ Some to rede old romances,
Them occupied for ther plesances,
Some to make verèlaies and laies,
And some to other diverse plaies.’ ”

“ Nay, sir,” answered the old knight, who had glanced with a smile at his guest’s gilded spurs, as he gave himself the name of Hal of Hadnock, “ we were but talking of some old deeds of arms, which, doubtless, you in your career have often heard of. As to lays, when my nephew Richard is away, we have but little poesy in the house, except when this sweet ward of mine, Mary Markham, will sing us a gay ditty.”

“ Not to-night, not to-night,” cried the lady on Isabel Beauchamp’s left ; “ I am not in tune to-night.”

Isabel bent her head to her fair companion, and whispered a word which made the blood come warm into Mary Markham’s cheek ; but Catherine, with a gay toss of her head, and a glance of her blue eye at the handsome stranger, exclaimed, “ I love neither lay nor ballad ; they are but plain English twisted out of form, and set to a dull tune.”

“Indeed, lady!” said the stranger, gazing upon her with an incredulous smile. “I have ever thought that music and verse made sweet things sweeter; and, methinks, even now, were it some tender lay addressed to your bright looks, you would not find the sounds so rude.”

A smile passed round the little circle, but did not visit the lip of Sir Henry Dacre; and, though Catherine Beauchamp laughed, with a scornful smile, it seemed as if she knew not well whether to look upon the stranger’s words as kind or uncourteous.

“Ha, Kate, he touched you there,” said the old knight. “What think you, Abbot, has not our guest judged our niece aright?”

“I believe it is so with all ladies,” answered the Abbot gravely; “they find the words of praise sweet, and the words of blame bitter, whether it be in song or saying. You men of the world nurture them in such folly. You flatter them too much, so that, like the tongue of a wine-bibber, they can taste nothing but what is high-seasoned.”

“Faith, not a whit, reverend lord,” cried

Hal of Hadnock gaily ; “ craving your forgiveness, we deal with them as Heaven intended. Fair and delicate in mind and frame, we shelter their persons from all rough winds and storms, as far as may be, and their ears from all harsh sounds. They were not made to cope with the rough things of life ; and if they find wholesome exercise for body and soul, good father, in the chase and in the confessional, it is as much as is needed. The Church has the staple trade for truth, especially with ladies ; and for any laymen to make it their merchandise would be against the laws of Cupid’s realm.”

“ I fear you speak lightly, my son,” said the Abbot, with a good-humoured smile ; “ but here comes your meal ; and I will give it my blessing.”

By such words as these, the ice of new acquaintance was soon broken, and, as the guest sat down at the side of the long table to partake of such viands as his entertainer’s hospitality provided for him, the party round the fire separated into various groups. The good

master of the mansion approached to do the honours of his board and press the stranger to his food. Catherine seemed smitten with a sudden fit of affection for her uncle and placed herself near him, where, with no small spice of coquetry, she sought to engage the attention of the visitor to herself. Sir Henry Daere remained talking by the fire with Isabel Beau-champ ; and, whatever was the subject of their discourse, the faces of both remained grave, almost sad ; while, at a little distance, Richard of Woodville conversed in low tones with fair Mary Markham, and their faces presented the aspect of an April sky, with its clouds and sunshine, being sometimes overshadowed by a look of care and anxiety, sometimes smiling gaily, as if the inextinguishable hopes of youth blazed suddenly up into a flame, after burning low and dimly for a while under some cold blast from the outward world.

The Abbot had resumed his seat by the fire, and Sir Simeon Roydon had not quitted his ; but the latter, though the good monk spoke to him from time to time, seemed buried in

his own thoughts, answered briefly, and often vaguely, and then fell into a reverie again, turning occasionally his eyes upon his fair kinswoman and the stranger, with an expression of no great pleasure.

With the old knight and Catherine Beauchamp, in the meanwhile, Hal of Hadnock kept up the conversation gaily, seeming to find a pleasure in so mingling sweet and bitter things together, in his language to the lady, as sometimes to flatter, sometimes to pique her ; and thus, without her knowing it, he contrived to put her through all her paces, like a managed horse, till every little weakness and fault in her character was displayed, one after another.

At first, Sir Philip Beauchamp was amused, and laughed at the stranger's merry jests, thinking, " It will do Kate good to hear some wholesome truth from an impartial tongue ;" but, as he saw that, whether intentionally or not, the words of Hal of Hadnock had the effect of bringing out all the evil points in her disposition to the eyes of his guest, he grew uneasy for his brother's child, and felt all her

faults more keenly from seeing her thus expose them, in mere vanity, to the acquaintance of an hour. He saw then, with satisfaction, his guest's meal draw towards a close, and, as soon as it was done, proposed that they should all retire to rest.

There was some consideration required as to what chamber should be assigned to Hal of Hadnock,—for small pieces of ceremony were, in those days, matters of importance,—but Sir Philip Beauchamp decided the matter, by telling Richard of Woodville to lead the visitor to the rose-tapestry room, and to place a good yeoman to sleep across his door. It was one of the principal guest-chambers of the house ; and its selection showed that the good knight judged his nephew's fellow-traveller to be of higher rank than he assumed.

Lighted by a page, Richard of Woodville led the way, and entered with his companion, when they reached the apartment to which they had been directed. Although it was now late, he remained there more than an hour, in conversation deeply interesting to himself, at least.

CHAPTER III.

THE FOREGONE EVENTS.

“Come, Richard of Woodville,” said his companion, as soon as they entered the chamber of the rose-tapestry, “let us be friends. You have served me at my need; and I would fain serve you; but I must first know how.”

“Faith, sir, that is not easy,” answered Woodville, “for I do not know how myself.”

“Well, then, I must think for you, Richard,” rejoined Hal of Hadnock; “what stays your marriage?”

Woodville gazed at him with some surprise, and then smiled. “My marriage with whom?” he asked.

“Nay, nay,” answered his new friend, “waste not time with idle concealments. I am a man who uses his eyes; and I can tell

you, methinks, all about every one in the hall we have just left."

"Well, stay yet a moment, till we can be alone," replied Woodville; "they will soon bring you a livery of wine and manchet bread."

"In pity stop them," cried Hal of Hadnock; "I have supped so late that I can take no more." But, as he was speaking, a servant entered with a cup of hot wine, and a small roll of fine bread upon a silver plate. As bound in courtesy, the guest broke off a piece of the manchet, and put the cup to his lips; but it was a mere ceremony, for he did not drink; and the man, taking away the rest of the wine and bread, quitted the room.

"Now, Richard, you shall see if I be right," continued Hal of Hadnock. "There is one pretty maid called Mary Markham, or I heard not your uncle right, whose cheek sometimes changes from the soft hue of the rose's outer leaves, to the deep crimson of its blushing breast, when a certain Richard of Woodville is near; and there is one good youth, called

Richard of Woodville, who can whisper sweet words in Mary Markham's ear, while his uncle holds converse with a new guest at a distance."

Woodville laughed, and made no answer; and his companion went on,

" Well, then, there is a fair Lady Catherine, beautiful and witty, but somewhat shrewish withal, and holding her own merits as most rare jewels, too good to be bestowed on ordinary men; who would have a lover, like a bird in a cage, piping all day to her perfections, and would think him well paid if she gave him but one of the smiles or looks whereof she is bountiful to those who love her not: and, moreover, there is one Sir Harry Dacre, a noble knight and true—for I have heard his name ere now—whom I should fancy to be her husband, were it not that—"

" Why should you think them so nearly allied ?" asked Woodville.

" Because she gave him neither word nor look," replied Hal of Hadnock. " Is not that proof enough with such a dame ?"

" You have read them but too rightly," re-

joined Richard of Woodville, with a sigh. “ He is not, indeed, her husband, but as near it as may be, betrothed in infancy—a curse upon such doings, that bind together in the bud two flowers that but destroy each other’s blossoms as they grow. They are to be wedded fully when she sees twenty years ; and poor Dacre, as noble and as true a heart as e’er was known, looks sternly forward to that day, as a prisoner does to the hour of execution ; for she has taught him too early, and too well, all those secrets of her bosom which a wiser woman would have hidden.”

“ He does not love her, that is clear,” answered his companion, in a graver tone than he had hitherto used. “ Did he never love her ?”

“ No, not with manly love,” replied Richard of Woodville. “ I remember well, when we were both boys together, and she as lovely a girl as ever was seen, he used to be proud then of her beauty, and call her his fair young wife. But even then she began the lessons, of which she has given him such a course, that never pale

student at Oxford was better indoctrinated in Aristotle, than he is in her heart. Even in those early days she would jeer and scoff at him, and if he showed her any little tenderness, would straightway strive to make him angry, would pretend great fondness for some other—for me—for any one who happened to be near ; would give his gifts away ; admire whatever was not like him. Oh, then fair hair was her delight, blue eyes were beautiful. She hated him, I do believe, because she was tied to him, and that was the only bond upon her own capricious will ; so that she resolved to use him as a boy does a poor bird tied to him by a string, pulling it hither and thither till its little heart beats unto bursting with such cruel tyranny ! Had she begun less early, indeed, her power of grieving him would have been greater, for he was well inclined to let affection take duty's hand, and love her if he could. But she herself soon ended that source of torture. She may now play the charmer with whom she will, she cannot wring his heart with jealousy."

" He does not love her, that is clear," repeated

Hal of Hadnock in a still graver tone, “but he may love another.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Woodville; “whom think you, sir?”

“Nay,” replied his companion, after a pause, “it is not for me, my good friend, to sow suspicious doubts or fears, where I find them not. I do believe Sir Harry Dacre will do all that is right and noble; and I did but mean to say, that his poor heart may know greater tortures than you dream of, if, tied as he is by the act of others, to a woman who will not suffer him to love her, he has met, or should hereafter meet, with one on whom all his best affections can be placed. I say not that he has,—I only say, such a thing may be.”

Richard of Woodville gazed down upon the rushes on the floor for several moments with a thoughtful look. “I know of whom you would speak,” he said at length, “but I think, in this, you have deceived yourself, sharp as your observation has been. Isabel has been the companion of both from youth; and to her, in early days, Dacre would go for consolation and kindness,

when worn out by this cold, vain lady's caprice and perverseness. She pitied him, and soothed ; and often have I heard her try to soften Catherine's conduct, making it seem youthful folly and high spirits ; and trying to take the venom from the wound. He looks upon Isabel as a sister—nothing more—I think."

Hal of Hadnock shook his head ; and then suddenly turned to another subject. " Well," he said, " you will not deny that I am right in some things, and, therefore, as I am in your secret, whether you will or not, now answer me my question. What stays your marriage ? "

" Good sooth, I cannot tell," replied Richard of Woodville ; " the truth is, this dear lovely girl came here some years gone, none knew from whence ; but it was my uncle brought her, and ever since he has treated her as a daughter. All have loved her and I more than all ; but day after day went by in sports and pleasures ; and, in a full career of happiness, I did not think till yesterday of risking the present by striving to brighten the future. Last evening, however, I said some plainer words than usual.

What she replied matters not ; but I saw that, afterwards, she was not so gay as usual ; and to-day I took a moment, when I thought good Sir Philip was in a yielding mood, and asked the hand of his dear ward—or daughter ; for I must not hide from you that men have suspicions, there is blood of the Beauchamps in this same lady's veins. He gave me a rough answer, however ; told me not to think of her, and would assign no reason why. I will not say we quarrelled, for I love him too much, and reverence him too much for that ; but I said in haste, that if I were not to think of her, I would stay no longer where suing only bred regret ; and that I would seek honour if I could not find a bride. He answered it was the best thing I could do ; and so without more thought than to feed my horse, and bid them all farewell, I put foot in stirrup for my own place hard by West Meon, with the intent of seeking service in some foreign land, as the wars here have come to an end. My good uncle only laughed at me, and told them, as I mounted in the court, that Dickon was out of humour, but would soon find his

good spirits again. I did not do so for a long way, however; but, as I went well sure of my lady's grace, I began to take heart after a-while and resolved that she should hear of me from other shores, till I could claim her, and no one say me nay."

"It was a good resolve," answered his companion; "for in such a case I know not what else could be done. But whither did you intend to bend your steps—to France?"

"Nay, not to France," said Woodville; "I love not the Frenchmen. If our good king, indeed, were again to draw the sword for the recovery of all that sluggish men and evil times have lost of our rightful lands since the Black Prince's death, right willingly would I follow thither to fight against the French, but not serve with them."

"But his royal thoughts are turned to other things," replied Hal of Hadnock; "he still holds the mind, I hear, to take the cross, and couch a lance for the sepulchre."

"That is gone by, I am told," answered Richard of Woodville; "this frequent sickness

that attacks him has made him think of other things, men say ; but, doubtless, you know better than I do."

" Nay, I know nought about it," said his fellow traveller ; " but it is predicted that he shall die at Jerusalem."

" Heaven send it," exclaimed Woodville ; " for if he live till then, his will be a long reign, methinks."

" Amen ! " rejoined the other ; " but whither thought you, then, to go ? "

" Perchance to the court of Burgundy," replied Richard ; " or to some of those Italian states, where there are ever hard blows to be found, and honour to be gained by doughty deeds."

" That famous land of Italy is somewhat far from our poor northern isle," answered Hal of Hadnock ; " especially for a lover. Methinks Burgundy were best ; but, doubtless, since you have come back again, your resolution has been left on the road behind us."

" No, not a whit," cried Woodville ; " what I judged best in haste some hours ago, I now

judge best at leisure. I have told Mary that I go for her sweet sake, to make me a high name, and with Heaven's blessing I will do it."

"Well, then," answered his new friend, "if such be your determination, I know some noble gentlemen in the court of that same Duke of Burgundy, who may aid your advancement for Hal of Hadnock's sake."

Richard of Woodville smiled, replying, "Doubtless, you do, fair sir; but may I tell them you sent me to them?"

"If you will but wait a day or two," said the other, "I will write them a letter, which you shall take yourself; and you will find that I have bespoke you kind entertainment."

"Thanks, noble sir, many hearty thanks," rejoined the old knight's nephew; "wait for a time I must, for I will not go solitary and unprepared. I must have horses, and men, and arms of the new fashion. I must also sell some acres of new copse, and some tons of old wine, to equip me for my own journey."

"Well, then, ere you go, you shall hear more

from me," replied Hal of Hadnock ; " and now, good Richard, let us talk more of the folks in the hall. I would fain hear farther. This Sir Harry Dacre, his face pleases me ; there is thought and a high heart therein, or I read not nature's book aright. Methinks, if he were wise, he too would seek renown in arms, instead of dangling at a lady's side that loves him not. Perchance if he were to seem to cast her by as worthless, and fix on honour for a mistress, her love—for who can tell all the wild whimsies of a capricious woman's heart ?—would follow him."

" He might think that worse than the other," said Woodville ; " I do not think he seeks her love."

" There he is wrong," answered his companion, " for it is against all rule of philosophy, when we are bound by a chain we cannot break, to let it rust and canker in our flesh. It is as well to polish it with any soft thing we can find ; and, granted that she has lost his love, 'twere well he should have hers, if she is to be his wife."

“Perhaps he may long to break the chain,” replied Richard drily; “were both to seek it, such contracts have been annulled by law, and by the Church, ere now; and the Pope, or at least his cardinals, are not always stubborn against gold and reason. But I doubt she will consent,” he added; “she loves a captive, and if she sees he seeks his freedom, she will resist, of course.”

“A most sweet temper,” observed Hal of Haddon, “yet it is to be thought of; and if I can help him, I will. To-morrow early, indeed, I thought to speed me back to Westminster; but I will stay an hour or two and see if I cannot play with a capricious lady, with art equal to her own. At all events, I shall learn more of what are her designs.”

“Designs! she has none!” exclaimed Richard of Woodville, “but to reign and triumph for the hour. Here has been Simeon of Roydon, doing her homage for these three days, as if she were the Queen of Love; and she has smiled upon him, for she still fancies she can so give Dacre pain: but no sooner did you come,

than she turned all the archery of her eyes on you."

" Yet left a blank target," replied Hal of Hadnock ; " but of this Sir Simeon of Roydon. I would have honest men beware, my good friend. I know something of him."

" And he of you," answered Woodville.

" Ay ?" asked his companion, " what makes you fancy so ?"

" Why I too am one of those who use their eyes, fair sir," said Woodville.

" And not their tongues, good friend," rejoined the other. " Well, you are wise. But tell me, did not Sir Harry Dacre go with the Duke of Clarence into France ?"

" Yes, it was there he gained his spurs last year," answered Richard ; " he fought well, too, at Bramham Moor, and earlier still, when a mere boy, against the Scots when they last broke in

" ' Muche hath Scotland forlore,
What at last, what before,
And little pries wonne.' "

" I thought I had heard of him," replied Hal of Hadnock. " However, if you hold your

mind to go to-morrow, we will ride together, and can talk further of these matters by the way; so for the present, good night, and fair dreams attend you."

"I must go and bid one of the men sleep across your door," said Richard of Woodville: "though this house is safe enough, yet it is as well always to be careful."

"It matters not, it matters not," answered his companion. "I have never found a man, against whom my own hand could not keep my head or my heart."

"As for your heart, sir," rejoined Woodville laughing, "you may yet find a woman who will teach you better."

"I know not," replied Hal of Hadnock laughing; "I am strong there, too; but no one can tell what is written in the stars," and thus they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GLUTTON MASS.

BREAKFAST was over, and yet, between the lower edge of the sun and the gentle sweeping line of the hills above which he was rising, not more than two hand-breadths of golden sky could be seen, for our ancestors were still, at that period, a matutinal people, rising generally before the peep of day, and hearing the birds' first song. On a large, smooth green, at the back of the Hall, yet within the limits of the park by which it was surrounded, with Dunbury Hill and the lines of the ancient invaders' camp at the top, rising still grey and cold before their eyes, the group which we have described in the second chapter, with the exception of the Abbot, was assembled to

practise or to witness some of the sports of the day. The ladies, having their heads now covered with the strange and somewhat cumbersome coifs then worn, stood upon a stone-paved path, watching the proceedings of their male companions ; and with them appeared good Sir Philip Beauchamp, in a long furred gown, with Hal of Hadnock, talking gaily to Catherine, on his right hand.

“ Well pitched, Hugh of Clatford,” cried the old knight, “ well pitched ; a toise beyond Sir Simeon.”

“ I will beat him by two,” exclaimed Richard of Woodville, taking the heavy iron bar which they were engaged in casting. “ Here goes !” and, after balancing it for a moment in his hand, he tossed it high in the air, sending it several yards beyond any one who had yet played their part.

“ Will you not try your arm, noble sir ?” asked Sir Philip, turning to Hal of Hadnock.

“ Willingly, willingly,” replied the guest ; “ but Sir Henry Dacre has not yet shown his skill.”

“ He will not do much,” said Catherine Beauchamp, in a low tone.

“ Fie, Kate,” cried Isabel, who overheard her ; “ that is untrue, as well as unkind.”

As she spoke, Daere took the bar, which had been brought back by one of the pages, and, without pausing to poise it carefully, as the rest had done, cast it within a foot or two of the spot which it had reached when sent from the hand of Woodville.

Hal of Hadnock then advanced, looking round with a gay laugh to the ladies, and saying, “ I am upon my mettle before such bright eyes. Here, boy, give me the bar.”

The page placed it in his hand ; and, setting his right foot upon the mark where the others had stood, he swung himself gracefully backward and forward on one leg, for a moment, and then tossed the bar in air. So light, so easy, was his whole movement, that no one expected to see the iron go half the distance it had done before ; but, to the surprise of all, it flew from his hand as if expelled from some of the military engines of the day, and,

striking the ground full twenty paces farther than it had yet done, bounded up off the sward and rolled on beyond.

“ Well delivered ! well delivered !” exclaimed Sir Philip Beauchamp ; and the men and boys around clapped their hands and cried, “ Hurrah !”

“ I will send it farther or break my arm,” cried Richard of Woodville.

“ If you do, I will beat you by a toise,” replied Hal of Hadnock laughing. But they all strove in vain ; no one could toss the bar within several yards of the stranger’s mark.

“ And now for a leaping bar,” cried Hal of Hadnock. “ Oh ! there stands one I see by the trees. Away, Woodville ! place it how high you will.”

“ I will beat you at that, noble sir,” said young Hugh of Clatford, who was reported the best jumper and runner in the country.

“ And should you do so, I will give you a quiver of arrows with peacocks’ feathers,” rejoined the gentleman. “ Now, take it in turns, I will leap last.”

Sir Simeon Roydon declined the sport, however, and Sir Harry Dacre stood back; but Clatford, and others of the old knight's retainers, took their stations, as well as Richard of Woodville; and the bar having been placed high in the notches, each took a run and leapt; some touching it with their feet, some clearing it clean.

Hal of Hadnock then gave a gay smile to his fair companions, with whom he had for the time resumed his place; and advancing at a walk, as if to put the pole up higher, he quickened his pace, at the distance of three or four steps, and cleared it by several inches.

“ You try him higher, Hugh,” cried Richard of Woodville laughing; “ I have done my best, good faith.”

“ Where will you put it ? ” asked the traveller, turning to the young retainer of the house.

“ Oh, at the highest notch,” answered Hugh of Clatford, lifting up the bar; “ can you do that, sir ? ”

“ I will see,” replied Hal of Hadnock;

“ stand back a bit,” and, taking a better start, he ran, and went over, with an inch to spare.

Poor Hugh was less fortunate, however, for though he nearly accomplished the leap, he tipped the bar with his heel, cast it down, and overthrowing his own balance, fell upon his face, amidst the laughter of his comrades. He rose somewhat abashed, with bloody marks of his contact with the ground ; but Hal of Hadnock laid his hand kindly on his arm, saying,

“ Thou art a nimble fellow, on my life. I did not know there was a man in England could go so near me, as thou hast done. Here, my friend, thy sheaf of arrows is well won,” and he poured some pieces of gold into his hand.

The words were more gratifying to the good yeoman than the money ; and bowing low, he answered, “ I was sure you were no ordinary leaper, sir, for few can go higher than I can.”

“ Oh, I am called Deersfoot,” replied Hal of Hadnock laughing ; “ get in and wash your face ; for you have done well, and need not be ashamed to show it.”

Some other sports succeeded ; but the

stranger took no further part therein, resuming his place by Catherine's side, apparently greatly smitten with her charms. The weak, vain, girl, flattered by his attention, gave way to all the coquetry of her nature, made her fine eyes use their whole artillery of glances, whispered, and smiled, spoke soft, and sometimes sighed ; till the good old knight, Sir Philip, not the best pleased with his niece's demeanour, broke off the amusements of the morning, exclaiming, "To the mass ! to the mass, sirs ! It is high time that we were on our way."

The sports, then, immediately ceased ; and passing through the great hall, the court-yard, and the gates, the whole party, arranged two and two, walked on amidst the neighbouring wood towards the parish church. Hal of Hadnock kept his place by Catherine's side, and Sir Harry Dacre followed with Isabel ; but somewhat to Richard of Woodville's annoyance, Sir Philip Beauchamp retained Mary Markham to himself, while his nephew and Sir Simeon of Roydon came after, neither, perhaps, in the best of humours.

The noble party found the church crowded with the villagers, every woman having her basket with her, covered with a clean white napkin, but apparently crammed as full as it well could be ; and Hal of Hadnock remembered that, as his companion had said the night before, this was one of the days appointed for those festivals which were then called, Glutton masses.

When the service was over, old Sir Philip advanced to leave the building with his household, not approving the disgraceful scene that was about to take place ; but Hal of Hadnock whispered to his companion of the road,

“ Let us stay and see. I have never witnessed one of these feats of gormandizing.”

“ Well, we shall save the credit of the family,” replied Richard of Woodville, in a low tone ; “ for the good priest looks upon my uncle as half a Lollard, because he will not stay in the church and eat till he bursts, in honour of the Blessed Virgin.”

Hal of Hadnock and his new friend accordingly lingered behind ; and hardly had the

old knight passed through the doors, when a scene of confusion took place quite indescribable. Every one brought forward his basket. Some who had lost their store, hunted for it amongst the rest. Some hurried forward to present, what they considered, very choice viands to the priest. Many a pannier was overturned ; and chickens, capons, huge lumps of meat, and leathern bottles of wine, mead, and ale, rolled upon the pavement. One or two of the latter got uncorked, and the contents streamed about amongst the napkins, which several of the women were spreading forth upon the ground. Knives were brandished ; thumbs and fingers were cut ; one man nearly poked out the eye of his better half in giving her assistance, and was heartily cuffed for his pains ; and a fat chorister slipped in consequence of putting his foot upon a fine trout dressed in jelly, and fell prostrate on his back in the midst. The people roared, the priest himself chuckled, and was a long time ere he could get his flock, or his countenance, into due order.

A song to the Virgin was then sung by way of grace ; and every one fell to, with an intention of outdoing his neighbour. To Richard of Woodville and his companion were assigned the places of honour near the clergy ; and the priest, looking well pleased down the long aisle, literally encumbered with the preparations for excess, whispered to the old knight's nephew, with an air of triumph,

“ Well I think we shall outdo Wallop this time, at least.”

“ Undoubtedly,” replied Richard of Woodville gravely ; “ but I fear you will think my friend and me no better than heathens, having brought nothing with us either to eat or drink.”

“ Poo ! there is plenty ; there is plenty,” replied the good man, “ and to spare. Eat as hard as we can, we shall be scarcely able to get through it ; and it is fitting, too, that something be left for the poor. We will all do our best, however, and thank you for your help.”

The onslaught was tremendous. One would have thought that the congregation had fasted for a month, so eagerly, so rapidly did they

devour the provisions before them ; and then they took to their bottles and drinking-horns, and when they had assuaged their thirst, recommenced the attack upon the meat with renewed vigour.

Richard of Woodville, and Hal of Hadnock, had soon seen enough of the glutton mass ; and, at a hint from his companion, the former took an opportunity of whispering to the priest,

“ We must go, I fear ; lest my uncle be angry at our absence.”

“ Well, well,” said the worthy clerk, “ if it must be so, we cannot help it ; but 'tis a sad pity, Master Richard, that so good a man as the Knight of Dunbury, should be such a discourager of pious ordinances.”

“ It is, indeed,” answered Woodville, in a solemn tone ; “ but all men have their prejudices ; and you know, father, he loves the Church.”

“ Ay, that he does, that he does,” replied the other heartily ; “ he sent me two fat bucks last summer.”

“ Oh, yes, he loves the Church, he loves the

Church ! ” rejoined Woodville, and gliding quietly down the side aisle, so that he might not disturb any of the congregation in their devout exercise of the jaws, he left the building, accompanied by Hal of Hadnock.

Both laughed as soon as they were out of the church ; but the guest of Sir Philip Beauchamp soon fell into deep thought ; and after walking forward for a little distance, he observed, “ It is strange, how men are inclined to make religion subservient to all their appetites. What are such things as these ? what are many of our solemn customs, but the self-same idolatrous rites practised by the ancient pagans, who deified their passions and their follies, and then took the simplest means of worshiping them ?—What can be the cause of such perversity ? ”

“ The devil ! the devil ! ” answered Richard of Woodville ; “ he who leads every one on from one wickedness to another ; who first teaches man to infringe God’s commandment, in order to gratify some desire, and then, as that desire grows fat and strong upon indulgence, first persuades us that its gratification is pleasing to

God, and in the end makes us worship it, as a God."

"But yet these same good folks fast and mortify themselves at certain times," said Hal of Hadnock; "and then carouse and revel, as if they had won a right to excess."

"To make up for lost time," said Woodville; "but the truth is, it is like a man playing at cross and pile, who when he has lost one stake tries to clear off the score against him by doubling the next. We have all sins enough to atone for; and we play the penance against the indulgence, and the indulgence against the penance. Give me the man who always mortifies himself in all that is wrong, who fasts from anger, malice, backbiting, lying and uncharitableness, who denies himself, at all times, excess in anything, and holds a festival every day, with gratitude to God for that which he, in his bounty, is pleased to give him. But after all, it is very natural that these corruptions should take place, even in a faith like ours. Depend upon it the purer a religion is, the more strong will be the efforts of

Sathanus to pervert it ; so that men may walk along his broad high-road, while they think they are taking the way to everlasting salvation."

" There is truth in that, good Richard," replied his companion ; " but I fear me, you have caught some of the doctrines of the Lollards, of whom you were speaking."

" Not a whit," answered Woodville ; " I am a good catholic Christian ; but I may see the evils which men have brought into the Church, without thinking ill of the Church itself, just as when looking at the Abbey down yonder, I see that a foolish architect from France has changed two of the fine old round arches, which were built in King Stephen's time, to smart pointed windows all bedizened with I don't know what, without thinking the Abbey anything but a very fine building notwithstanding."

Although Richard of Woodville would not admit that any impression had been made upon him by the preaching of the Lollards, certain it is that the teaching of Wicliff and his disciples had led men generally to look somewhat narrowly into the superstitious practices of the day,

and that the minds of many were imbued with the spirit of their doctrines, who, either from prejudice, timidity, or conviction, would not adopt the doctrines themselves. Nor was the effect transitory ; for it lasted till, and prepared the way for, the reformation.

In a thoughtful mood both the young gentlemen proceeded on their way through the wood ; and, on their arrival at the hall, found Sir Philip Beauchamp, and the rest of his family and guests, already seated at the early dinner of those days. The old knight received their excuses in good part, laughed at Hal of Hadnock's curiosity to see a glutton mass, and insisted he should sit down and finish his meal with him.

“ Had you been at Andover yesterday,” he said, “ you might have seen another strange sight : the Mayor set in the stocks, and a justice on either side of him.”

“ Indeed ? ” cried Hal of Hadnock seriously ; “ that were a strange sight to see. Pray on whose authority was it done ? and what was the crime these magistrates committed ? ”

"Good truth, I know not," answered Sir Philip. "A party of wild young men, they say, did it; and, as for the crime, it is not specified: but, on my life, it was justice, though of a rash kind; for Master Havering, the Mayor, has worked well for such a punishment; though, belike, the hands that put him in, were not the best fitted for the office."

"I should think not, certainly," replied Hal of Hadnock, in the same grave tone, and with an immovable countenance, though Richard of Woodville, who had contrived to seat himself next to Mary Markham, on the other side of the board, gave him a merry glance of the eye, as if he suspected more than he chose to say.

When the meal was over, which was not speedily, Hal of Hadnock proposed to take his departure; but Sir Philip, with all courtesy, besought him, at least, to stay till the afternoon meal or supper (then usually served at four o'clock), with the hospitable intent of urging him afterwards to spend another night under his roof; and, in the meantime, he pro-

mised to show him his armoury, his horses, and his library ; though to say the truth, the suits of rich armour were more numerous than the books, and the horses more in number than the people who frequented the library. Hal of Hadnock, for reasons of his own, accepted the invitation, and Richard of Woodville, though his approaching departure was already announced, agreed to stay in order to bear him company when he went.

I will not lead the patient reader through all the rooms of the hall, or detain him with a description of the armoury and its contents, or carry him to the stable and show him all the horses of the good old knight Sir Philip, from the battle horse, which had borne him through many a stricken field in former days, to the ambling palfrey of his daughter Isabel. Hal of Hadnock, indeed, submitted to all this with a good grace ; for he was a kind-hearted and considerate person, and little doubted that his friend Richard of Woodville, was employing the precious moments to the best advantage with fair Mary Markham. To all these sights, with the

discussion of sundry knotty points, regarding shields, and pallets, and unibers, the properties of horses, and the form and extent of the mania faire, were given well nigh two hours; and, when Hal of Hadnock and his noble host returned to the great hall, they found it tenanted alone by Catherine Beauchamp and Sir Simeon of Roydon.

Richard and Dacre, Isabel and Mary, the lady said, were gone to walk together in the park; but she had waited, she added, with a coquettish air, thinking it but courtesy to give her uncle's honoured guest a companion, if he chose to join them.

So direct an invitation was, of course, not to be refused by Hal of Hadnock; and he thanked her with high coloured gallantry for her consideration.

“ Do you go too, Sir Simeon ? ” inquired Sir Philip Beauchamp; but the courtly knight replied that he had only waited to take his leave; as he had business to transact in the neighbourhood, and must be home ere night. Before Catherine and her companion set out, however,

Sir Simeon drew her aside, as the relationship in which she stood towards him seemed to justify, and spoke to her for a moment eagerly. A few of his words caught the quick ear of Hal of Hadnock, as he stood talking to the old knight, who took care to impress him with the knowledge, that his fair niece was fully betrothed to Sir Harry Daere ; and though those words were, apparently, of small import, Hal of Hadnock remembered them long after.

“ I will tell you all, if you come,” replied Sir Simeon, to some question the lady had asked ; “ but mind, I warn you.—Will you come ? ”

“ I do not know,” answered Catherine, with a toss of the head ; “ it is your business to wait and see.”

“ Wait I cannot,” rejoined the knight ; “ see I will ;” and the lady, turning to her uncle and his companion, accompanied the latter through a long passage at the back of the hall, to the door which led to the ground where the sports of the morning had taken place.

The park of Dunbury was very like that described by old Chaucer,

“ —— A parke enclosed with a wall
In compace rounde, and by a gate small,
Who so that would he frelie mighten gone
Into this parke, ywalled with grene stone.

* * * * *

The soile was plain, and smoth, and wondir soft,
All oversprad with tapettes that Nature
Had made herself, covirid eke aloft
With bowis grene, the flouris for to cure,
That in ther beautie thei mai long endure.”—

The walks around were numerous and somewhat intricate ; and whether fair Catherine Beauchamp knew or not the direction that her friends had taken, she certainly did not follow the path most likely to lead to where they really were ; but, as she and Hal of Hadnock walked along, she employed the time to the best advantage in carrying on the siege of his heart. He, for his part, humoured her to the full, having a firm conviction that it would be far better, both for Sir Henry Dacre and herself, that the imperfect marriage between them should be annulled at their mutual desire, than remain a chain upon them, only increasing in weight. It must not, indeed, be supposed that he took any very deep interest in the matter ; but, as it

fell in his way, he was willing enough to forward what he believed to be a noble-minded man's desire for emancipation from a very bitter sort of thraldom ; and it is seldom an unpleasant or laborious task for a light-hearted man to sport with a capricious girl. Thus went he on, then, with that mixture of romantic gallantry and teasing jest, which is of all things the most exciting to the mind of a coquette, with sufficient admiration to soothe her vanity, but with not sufficient devotion ever to allow her to imagine that her triumph is complete. Neither did he let her gain any advantage ; for, though it was evident that she clearly perceived the name he had assumed was not his own, he gave her no information, playing with her curiosity without gratifying it.

“ But what makes you think,” he asked, “ that I am other than I seem ? Why should I not be plain Hal of Hadnock, a poor gentleman from the Welsh marshes ? ”

“ No, no, no,” she said, “ it is not so. A thousand things prove it : first, manners, appearance, dress. Why, are you not as fine as my

good cousin a dozen times removed, Sir Simeon of Roydon, the pink of court gallants?"

"And yet I have heard that he is not as rich as an Abbot," replied Hal of Hadnock.

"No, in truth," answered Catherine. "He is as poor as a verger; and, like the Curlew, carries all his fortune on his back, I believe."

"I suspect not his own fortune only," rejoined her companion, "but a part of other men's."

"But then your knightly spurs, good sir," continued Kate, returning to the point; "you must be Sir Hal of Hadnock at the least. Now I never heard of that name amongst our chivalry; and I am deep read in the rolls of knighthood."

"Oh, I am newly dubbed," replied the gentleman laughing; "but you shall know all some day, Lady fair."

"I shall know very soon," answered Catherine; "for Simeon of Roydon will tell me."

"More, perhaps, than he knows himself," said Hal of Hadnock.

"Oh, he knows well enough," exclaimed

Catherine Beauchamp. “ He has already told me, that you are a man of noble birth and high estate, and promised to speak the name ; but I would rather owe it to your courtesy than his.”

“ Nay, what would I not do for the love of your bright eyes ?” asked Hal of Hadnock, in a tone half tender, half jesting ; “ methinks the light in them, even now, looks like the morning sun reflected from a dewdrop in a violet. But why should I tell you ought ? I have been warned that you are another’s. Out upon such cold contracts that bind unwilling hearts together ! It is clear, there is no great love in your heart for this Sir Harry Dacre.”

“ Not too much to lie comfortably in a hazel nut,” answered Catherine.

“ Then why do you not ask to have the marriage annulled ?” demanded her companion. “ There never yet was bond, in which the keen eyes of the Court of Rome could not find a flaw.”

“ Why, it would grieve his proud heart sadly,” replied the lady ; “ yet I have often thought of it.”

“ If he be proud—and so he is,” rejoined Hal of Hadnock, “ he would never refuse to consent, however much it might vex him. Well, well, set yourself free from him, and then you shall know who I am. As for this fellow Roydon he knows nothing, and will but lead you wrong; but were I you, I would be a free woman ere a year were over; and then, this fair hand were a prize well worth the winning to higher hearts than a Dacre or a Roydon.”

With such conversation they wandered on for some time, without overtaking the party they had come out to seek. They saw them once at some distance, indeed, through the overhanging boughs of an opposite alley just fringed with early leaves; but they did not hurry their pace, and only met them at length at the door of the hall, as they were all returning. Sir Henry Dacre was then walking by Isabel’s side, with his arms crossed upon his chest, and his brow sad and stern. As soon as he saw Catherine and her companion, he fixed his eyes inquiringly upon her, and seemed to mark her heightened colour and somewhat excited look; then fell into

thought again ; and then laid his hand upon her arm, saying, “ I would speak with you for a moment, Kate.”

“ It must not be long,” she replied coldly ; “ for I have dipped my feet in the dew, and would fain dry them.”

“ It shall not be long,” answered Sir Henry Dacre ; and he remained with her behind, while the rest entered slowly. Ere they had passed the door, the anxious ear of Isabel heard high tones without ; and, in a few minutes, as they paused for a moment in the hall, where the servants were already spreading the board for supper, Sir Henry entered with a hasty step.

“ My horse to the gate,” he said, addressing one of the attendants.

“ At what hour, Sir Knight ?” asked the servant.

“ Directly !” answered Dacre ; “ the men can follow. Farewell, dear Isabel,” he continued, turning to Catherine’s cousin ; “ I can stay no longer.—Farewell Mary !” He grasped Richard of Woodville’s hand, but said nothing ;

and with a low and formal bow to Hal of Hadnock, turned towards the door leading to the court.

Isabel Beauchamp followed him quietly, laid her hand upon his arm, and spoke eagerly, but in a low tone.

“I cannot, I cannot, Isabel,” he replied aloud; “dear girl, do not urge me. I shall forget myself; I shall go mad. Excuse me to your noble father—farewell!” and opening the large door, he issued forth and closed it behind him.

Isabel Beauchamp turned with her eyes full of tears; but passing the rest silently, as if afraid to speak, she hurried to her own chamber, wept for a few minutes, and then sought her father.

The supper that day was a grave and silent meal. There was a stern cloud on old Sir Philip Beauchamp’s brow when he came down to the hall; and as he took his seat he asked, looking round, “Where is Catherine?”

“I know not,” answered Mary Markham; “but she went to her own chamber when she came in.”

“Shall I seek the lady, sir?” asked one of the retainers of the house, from the lower part of the table.

“No! let her be,” replied the old knight; and then he murmured, “perhaps she has still some shame; and if so, it is well.”

To Hal of Hadnock his demeanour was courteous, though so grave, that his guest could not but feel that some share in the disagreeable event which had evidently taken place, was attributed to him; and though he knew that his intention was good, yet, like many another man, he had reason to feel sorry that he had meddled in other men’s affairs, at all. Supper was nearly over, the light was beginning to wane in the sky, and the stranger was thinking it was time to depart, when the porter’s boy came into the hall, and, approaching Richard of Woodville, whispered something in his ear.

The young gentleman instantly rose and went out into the court, but returned a moment after, and spoke a word to Hal of Hadnock, who started up and followed him. In the court they found a man booted and spurred, and dusty

from the road, holding by the bridle a horse, with one leg bent and the head bowed down, as if exhausted by long exercise.

The man instantly uncovered his head, when he saw the gentlemen appear, and throwing down the bridle advanced a step, while Hadnock gave him a quick sign, which he seemed to comprehend.

“ Your presence is required immediately, sir,” he said, without adding any name; “ your father is ill—very ill, and I have lost some hours in seeking you. I heard of you, however, at Andover, then at the Abbey, then at the priest’s house in the village, and ventured on here, as ‘tis matter of life and death.”

“ You did right,” said Hal of Hadnock briefly, but with deep anxiety on his face. “ Ill, say you? very ill? and I away!—Why I left him better.”

“ One of those fits again, sir,” answered the man; “ for an hour he was thought dead; but had regained his speech when I set out; yet the leeches much fear—”

“ I come! I come!” answered Hal of Had-

nock. “Speed on before ; I will be in London ere day-break. Change your horse often, and lose no time. Buy a stout horse wherever you can find one, and have him ready for me on Murrel green. Away, good fellow ! Say that I am coming !—Richard, I must go at once.”

“ Well, I will with you, sir,” replied Richard of Woodville ; “ you go to bid my good uncle adieu. I will order out the horses.”

“ So be it,” answered Hal of Hadnock ; “ you shall be my guide, for I must not miss my way,” and, after giving the messenger some money, he turned and re-entered the hall.

CHAPTER V.

THE ASSASSINATION.

CLOUDS had again come over the heavens as day declined, and the light had nearly faded from the sky; but yet the horses of Hal of Hadnock and Richard of Woodville, had not appeared in the court-yard, and the former showed great anxiety to proceed at once. His gaiety was gone; and he stood, either playing, in deep thought, with the hilt of his dagger, the sheath of which hung from a ring in the centre of his belt, or listening for the horses, with his ear turned towards the door of the hall.

“I fear, sir, the news you have received are bad,” said old Sir Philip Beauchamp, who, with the rest of the party, had by this time risen from table.

“A father’s perilous sickness, noble Sir Philip,” answered Hal of Hadnock ; “one who might have been kinder, indeed ; but still the tidings must ever be sad ones to a son’s heart. I wonder that the horses be not ready.”

“Go, Hugh, and see,” replied Richard of Woodville ; but a serving man, who had entered the moment before, stopped the messenger, saying,

“They will be here in a minute, sir. A shoe was found loose on the gentleman’s steed, and John the Smith has had to fasten it.”

“Well, Dick, thou goest in good earnest at last,” said the old knight, turning to his nephew ; “and on my life I think it is the best thing thou canst do. Thou art a good soldier, and wilt raise thyself to renown. I need not tell thee what thy duties are ; but thou must take a horse and arms of thine old uncle, whom thou mayest never see again, perchance. Choose them for thyself, boy. Thou wilt find wherewithal in that purse,” and he placed a full one in his nephew’s hand. “As my good brother, the Abbot, is not here, thou must content thy-

self with my benison. Be it upon thee, Richard ! Love thy king, thy country, and thine honour. But, above all things, love God, fear his anger, hope in his mercy, trust in his promises, and submit thine own reason in all things to his word. So shalt thou prosper in this world ; so shalt thou be meet for another."

The young man caught his uncle's hand and kissed it ; and the old knight pressed him for a moment in his arms.

" Here, Richard, take this gift of me," said Isabel : " 'tis but a jewel for your baldric."

Mary Markham did not speak ; but after he had pressed his lips on Isabel's cheek, she offered hers silently, placing a ring in his hand.

" I will bear it to honour, and win you yet, Mary," said Woodville, in a low voice, as he took his parting kiss ; and he felt that her cheek was wet with tears.

" Hark ! there are the horses, noble sir," exclaimed Hal of Hadnock, turning to Sir Philip. " Once more, farewell ! Your nephew shall give you further news of me ; and may one day

clear me in your eyes for somewhat you have thought amiss."

Then bidding the ladies adieu, he turned to the hall door, and mounted, with a princely largesse to the servants of the house. Richard of Woodville followed, sprang on his horse's back, and, giving one look back, rode through the gates after his companion.

The wood was dark and sombre, as they proceeded amidst its thick coverts ; but when they issued forth a faint glimmer of twilight served to guide them on the way, and they quickened their pace. There were lights in the windows of the cottages, too, as they passed through the village ; and when they reached the other side, they caught a pale line of yellow light, peeping out from beneath the dark clouds upon the edge of the western sky, and gilding the water of the stream. Riding on quickly, they had not left the last house behind them five minutes, when Hal of Hadnock pulled up his horse short, exclaiming, " Hark ! there is a scream ! "

" 'Tis but a screech-owl," answered Richard of Woodville : " they come forth in spring."

But as he spoke there was another shriek, apparently before them ; and each struck his horse with the spur, and dashed on. No other sound met their ear, however, except what seemed the distant galloping of a horse, which might be but the echo of their own beasts' feet. When they reached the spot where, on the preceding night they had seen the wild fire over the moor, Hal of Hadnock again drew in his rein, saying, “ It came from somewhere here.”

“ It seemed to me near where we then were,” replied Richard of Woodville. “ Perchance 'twas but some villagers got drunk at that glutton mass.—See, there is the Otter again ! ”

“ It was a shriek of pain or terror,” answered his companion. “ Otter ! That is no Otter ! Here, hold my horse,” and springing from the saddle in a moment, he dashed down the bank and plunged into the river. Though shallow in most places, it there formed a deep pool ; but Hal of Hadnock, expert in all exercises alike, struck out at once and caught the object he had seen, just as it was sinking. A feeling of horror and alarm seized him, as his hand grasped the

long hair of a woman ; but raising her head above the water again, he held it gently on his left arm, and with his right swam in towards the shore.

“Here, help, Richard,” he cried, “set the horses free, and take her. ‘Tis a woman !”

Woodville was down the bank in a moment, exclaiming, “Who is it ? Who is it ?”

“I know not,” answered Hal of Hadnock, raising her so far above the water, that his companion could grasp her in his arms and lift her out ; but as he himself followed, placing one knee on the shore, with a sad heart, he heard his companion exclaim in the accents of deep grief,

“Good heaven ! it is Catherine !”

“Quick, bear her to the nearest house,” cried Hal of Hadnock ; “the spark of life may be still there.—I will follow with the horses.”

“Up the short path to the right, lies the chanter’s,” cried Richard, raising the unhappy girl in his stout arms and running along the road.

The horses were easily caught, and mounting

one, and leading the other, Hal of Hadnock followed, obtaining a glance of his companion just as he turned from the highway, towards a spot where the thatch of a small house peeped up above some trees. He was at the door as soon as Woodville ; and, lifting the latch, they both went in.

An old man and woman were sitting before the fire ; but the sudden entrance of two men roused them in fear ; and, when they saw who it was, and what they bore, all was eager hurry and lamentation. The inanimate body of Catherine Beauchamp, however, was speedily laid in the old chanter's bed, in the neighbouring chamber ; and such simple means as first suggested themselves, were employed to ascertain if life were still within that fair and silent frame. But she lay calm and still as if asleep, with her features full of a sweet placidity, such as they had seldom worn in life.

“ It is past,” said Richard of Woodville ; “ it is past.—Poor girl ! how has this happened ? Ha ! there is the mark of a grasp upon her throat.”

“ See there, too,” cried Hal of Hadnock ; and he pointed with his hand to where, upon the fine lawn that covered her bosom, was a faint red stain, half washed out by the water of the stream, as if blood had been spilt. No wound, however, was to be discovered ; and while the two gentlemen stood and gazed, the old chanter’s sister continued, ineffectually, to employ every effort to reawaken the inanimate frame, and the old man himself ran off to the Abbey to procure farther aid.

“ Go into the other room, sirs, go into the other room,” said the good dame at length ; “ I will take off her wet clothes. ’Tis that keeps her from coming to.”

Hal of Hadnock shook his head ; for he could not see that pale countenance, those immovable lips, those sightless eyes, without feeling sure—too sure—that life had departed for ever. He would not say anything, however, to discourage the zeal of the poor woman ; and he accordingly accompanied Richard of Woodville into the chamber which they had first entered, and stood with him in silent thought before the fire.

Neither spoke ; for the mind of each was busy with sad and dark inquiries, regarding the event which had just taken place ; yet neither could arrive at anything like a conclusion. Was it her own act ? was it accident ? was it the deed of another ? and, if so, of whom ? Such were the questions which both asked themselves. Both, too, entertained suspicions ; but yet they did not like even to admit those suspicions to their own hearts, for how often does the first conclusion of guilt do injustice to the innocent ; but while they were still in thought, the voice of the chanter's sister was heard exclaiming,

“ Come hither, Master Richard ! come hither ! See here,” and as they entered, she pointed to the poor girl's arm, which now lay uncovered on the bed-clothes, adding, “ there is the grasp of a hand, clear enough ! Look, all the fingers and the thumb ! ”

“ Stay,” said Hal of Hadnock ; “ that might be mine, Richard, or yours in raising her out of the stream.”

“ I took her by the other arm,” answered Richard of Woodville.

“ And I do not remember having touched her arm at all,” said Hal of Hadnock, after thinking for a moment.

“ Oh, no, sirs,” cried the old woman ; “ that hand must have grasped her in life ; else it would not have brought the blood to the skin. Hark ! there are the people coming,” and, in another minute, the good old Abbot, and four or five of his monks, ran in breathless and scared.

“ Alas ! alas ! Richard, what is this ? ” cried the Abbot.

“ A sad and dark affair, father,” replied Richard of Woodville, while one of the monks, famed for his skill in leechcraft, advanced to the bed-side and put his hand upon the heart ; “ I fear life is extinct.”

The Abbot gazed at the monk as he knelt ; but the good brother slowly waved his head, with a melancholy look, saying, “ Yet leave me and the old woman alone with her.”

“ I will stay and aid,” replied the Abbot. “ I am her uncle.”

All the rest withdrew ; and many were the

eager questions of the monks, as to how the accident had happened. Richard of Woodville told the tale simply as it was, the two shrieks that they had heard, the discovery of the body in the water, and its recovery from the stream.

“Ay, she screamed when she fell in, and when she first rose,” said one of the monks; “drowning people always do.”

Woodville made no reply; for he would not give his own suspicions to others: but Hal of Hadnock asked him in a low voice, “Did you not hear the galloping of a horse, on the other side, as we came near?”

“I did,” answered Richard, in the same tone; “I did, too plainly.”

In about a quarter of an hour, the Abbot came forth, and all made way for him.

“What hope?” asked Woodville looking into his uncle’s face for speedier information.

“None!” replied the Abbot; “how has this chanced, my son? There are marks of violence.”

The same tale was told over again; but this time Richard of Woodville added the fact of a

horse's feet having been heard, and the Abbot mused profoundly.

"I will have the body carried down to the Abbey," he said at length. "You, Richard, speed to my brother, and break the tidings there. Come down with him to the Abbey, and we will consult. Bring Dacre too."

"Dacre has been gone more than two hours," answered Richard of Woodville; "but I will seek my uncle Philip," and he turned towards the door.

Hal of Hadnock stayed him for a moment, however, saying, "I must ride on, Richard. You know that my call hence admits of no delay. But let every one remark and remember, for this matter must be enquired into, that I heard and saw all that this good friend of mine did; the shrieks, the galloping of a horse, the body in the water. You shall have means of finding me, too, should it be needful; and now, my Lord Abbot, a sad good night. Farewell, Richard: you shall hear from me soon." Thus saying, he quitted the cottage, mounted his horse, and rode away at a quick pace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUSPICIONS.

UPON the borders of Hampshire and Sussex, but still within the former county, lies, as the reader probably knows, a large tract of land but little cultivated even now, and which, in the days whereof I speak, was covered either with scattered trees and copses or wild heath, having various paths and roads winding through it, which led now to a solitary village, with a patch of cultivated land round about it, now to a church or chapel in the wild, now travelled on through the hills, which are high and bare, to Winchester or Basingstoke. Deep sand occupies a great portion of the ground, through which it is well nigh impossible to construct a firm road ; and the whole country is broken

with wild and rapid undulations, of no great height or depth but every variety of form, the resort of all those rare birds, which afforded so much interest and amusement to gentle White of Selbourne.

Through this rude and uncultivated tract, a little before the close of day, in the beginning of April 1413, two gentlemen clothed in deep mourning of the fashion of that day, rode slowly on. Both were very grave and silent ; and, if the complexion of their thoughts was sad and solemn, the aspect of the scene at that hour, was not calculated to lighten the heart, though it might arouse feelings of admiration. The sun hung upon the edge of the sky ; broad masses of cloud floated over the wide expanse of azure which stretched out above the wild heath ; and their shadows, as they crossed the slanting rays, swept over the varied surface below, casting long lines of country into deep blue shade, while the rest shone in the cool pale evening sunshine of the yet unconfirmed spring. Each dell and pit, too, at that hour, was filled with the same sort of

purple shadow : the brakes and banks looked wilder and more strongly marked from the position of the sun ; the occasional clumps of fir trees cut sharp and black upon the western sky ; and everything was stern and grand and solemn.

Rising over one slope and descending another, by paths cut imperfectly through the heath and gorse, the travellers had ridden on for half an hour without speaking, when at length, at the bottom of a deep valley, where the sun could no longer be seen, and the shades of evening seemed already to have fallen, they stopped to let their horses drink in a large piece of water, sheltered by a thick copse, and gazed upon the reflection of the blue sky above and the clouds floating over it. As they moved on again, a large white bird started up from the reeds, and flew heavily away, with its snowy plumage strangely contrasting with the dark back-ground of the wood and hill.

“ ‘Tis like a spirit winging its way from earth,” said Sir Henry Dacre, following the bird with his eyes. “ Poor Catherine ! Would

that aught else had set thee free from the chain that bound thee to me, but death."

" Luckless girl, indeed ! " replied Richard of Woodville ; " from her infancy unfortunate ! And yet men thought that the hand of heaven had showered upon her its choicest gifts: beauty, wealth, kind friends, and a noble heart to love her, if she would but have welcomed it. But, alas ! Harry, the crowning gift of all was wanting : a spirit that could use God's blessings aright."

" It was more the fault of others than her own," said Sir Harry Dacre, " that I do believe. Her mother made her what she was ! 'Tis sad ! 'tis very sad, Richard, that at the period when we have no power to form ourselves, each weak fool who approaches us can give us some bad gift which we never can cast off."

" Like the evil fairies at a child's birth," answered Richard of Woodville ; " and certainly her mother was a bad demon to her ; but still, though I would not speak ill of those who are gone, yet poor Kate received the gifts willingly enough, destructive as they were. Would to

Heaven it had been otherwise ; but others encouraged her in all that was wrong, as well as her mother. This man, Roydon, was no good counsellor for a lady's ear."

The brow of Sir Henry Dacre grew dark as night. "He is a scoundrel," he cried, "he is a scoundrel ; and if ever he gives me the chance of having him at my lance's point, he or I shall go to that place where all men's actions are made clear.—Oh ! that I knew the truth, Richard ! Oh ! that I knew the truth ! "

"There is one who knows it," answered Richard of Woodville, "who never suffers foul deeds to rest in darkness. Trust to him ; and if this knave does but support his charge, perhaps your lance may be the avenging instrument of Heaven."

"May it be so," replied the Knight ; "but I doubt it, Richard. True, he has not shown himself a coward in the field ; and yet I cannot but think that he is craven at heart. Saw you not how carefully his letter to Sir Philip was worded ? how he insinuated more than he dared say ? and, then, why did he not come ?—A sick-

ness, forsooth ! The excuse of an idle schoolboy. He would not face me,—that is the truth. He fears me, Richard, and will not dare the test of battle."

" Well, that we shall soon see," answered his companion ; " your messenger must be at my house, by this time, with his reply."

" I trust so," said Daere, thoughtfully ; " yet he will take time to write carefully, believe me. His will be no rash epistle, written in fiery anger at his cousin's death. No, no ; it will be done as if a scrivener had dictated every word, and in a courtly hand. But whatever he does, mark me, he will leave the poison behind, and so calculate as to cast suspicion over me for life."

" But who suspects you, Daere ?" asked Richard of Woodville, with a smile ; " not one honest man on earth. You are too well known for doubts to light upon you. Does not Sir Philip, her own uncle, love you as a son ? and can you let the idle words of a knave, like this, disturb your peace ?"

" My peace, Richard ?" said Sir Henry Daere

sadly ; “ can a high and honest heart ever feel peace, so long as one doubt, one unrefuted charge, casts a cloud upon it ? I would rather die a thousand deaths than have men point at me, and say, ‘ he was suspected of a foul crime against an innocent lady ; ’ and besides even those that I love best, those who hold me dearest, may often ask themselves, ‘ could it be true ? ’ ”

“ Not a whit ! ” replied Woodville ; “ no one will ever ask such a thing. Like a wounded man, you think that every one will touch the spot, and feel the pain in fancy. Cast off such imaginations, Dacre ; secure in your own honour, laugh suspicion to scorn, and trust to the noble and the true to do justice to those who are like themselves.”

“ Would I could do so, Richard,” said the Knight ; “ and it would be easy too, did we not know that the wide world is so full of arrant knaves, and that amongst the knaves there are such hypocrites, that honesty has no touchstone whereby true metal can be really known from false ; and men rightly doubt the value of each

coin they take, so cunning are the counterfeits. Hypocrisy is a greater curse to mankind than wickedness; for it makes all virtue doubted, and fills the bosoms of the good with suspicion, from a knowledge of the feigning of the bad. Besides, amongst those who hold a middle course, neither plunging deep in the stream of vice and wrong, nor staying firmly on the shore of honour, how gladly every one attributes acts to others that may out-do the darkness of his own! No, no; suspicion never yet lighted on a name that ever was wholly pure again. All I ask is, to give me that man before me, let me cram the falsehood down his throat, at the sword's point, and wring the truth from his dying lips, or let me die myself."

" Well, we shall see what he replies," answered Richard of Woodville, finding it useless to argue farther with him; " and if, as you suspect, he evades the question, what think you then to do?"

" To go with you to Burgundy," answered Dacre; " for I shall be, then, one fitted well to take a part in civil broils—a right serviceable

man, where danger is rifest, ever ready to lead the way in peril, having nor wife, nor relative, nor friend, nor hope, nor home, to make him feel the stroke that takes his life, more than the scratch of a sharp thorn that tears him as he passes through the wood."

"But you will surely first return," said Woodville; "to say farewell to my good uncle, and sweet Isabel?"

"I do not know," replied Dacre. "Dear Isabel, she tried to cheer me; and I know would not for worlds suffer doubts of me to rest for an hour in her heart; and yet they will come and go, Richard, whether she will or not. Each time I take her hand she'll think of Catherine; and though she'll answer boldly 'it is false,' as often as suspicions rise, yet they will be remembered, and rest for ever as a shadow over our friendship."

"You do her wrong, Harry," answered his companion. "Your mind is sickly; and, as a man in a sore disease, you see all things through one pale mist. Isabel may often think of her who is no more, may grieve for her, and regret

that she did not make life happier to herself and others, and that she met so early and so sad a death ; but she will ever call her back to mind as one who wronged you, not as one wronged by you : and you may be happy yet."

He spoke gravely, and Sir Henry Dacre turned and gazed at him, as if for explanation of his words ; but Richard said no more ; and riding on in silence they soon after came to a point where the road began to rise, winding in slowly between two wooded hills, with a small streamlet flowing on by its side. The sun was sinking below the horizon, as they passed through a village, with the bright blacksmith's forge jutting out beyond the other buildings ; and when at length they drew the rein before the gate of a tall house bosomed in trees, it was well nigh dark.

Several servants came instantly into the court ; and, giving their horses to be taken to the stable, the two gentlemen entered the outer hall, and thence proceeded onwards to a room beyond, where they were immediately joined by a stout man, habited as a courier, who placed a letter in

the hand of Sir Harry Dacre without speaking.

“ So thou art back, Martin,” said the Knight, while Richard of Woodville called for lights.

“ Yes, noble sir,” answered the servant ; “ but I have had to ride hard, for he kept me a long time ; but that I don’t wonder at.”

“ Indeed ! ” exclaimed Sir Henry, “ why should he keep you long ? ”

“ Because he wrote a long letter, sir,” replied the man ; “ he might have waited till doomsday, if he had been in my place, and I in his.”

“ Did he look ill ? ” enquired the Knight.

“ Not he, sir,” answered the servant, “ he was out goss hawking after larks when I arrived.”

“ The liar ! ” muttered Sir Henry Dacre ; but at the same moment lights were brought in, and making the messenger a sign to retire, the Knight opened the letter and read. Richard of Woodville stood by and watched him, while his fine features, as he gazed intently upon the paper, assumed first a look of scorn and then of anger ; and at length he exclaimed, “ As I thought,

Richard,—as I thought. On my life, I must be an astrologer and not know it, to have read this man's conduct to the letter, beforehand. Mark what he says: 'Sir Simeon of Roydon brings no charge against Sir Henry Daere, and never has brought any; but holds him as good knight and true. He has, therefore, no cause of quarrel with the said knight; but, far from it, wishes him all prosperity, the which Sir Henry would have clearly seen, if he had read carefully the letter which Sir Simeon wrote to the good knight of Dunbury, and had not looked at it rashly. Therein Sir Simeon thought to do Sir Henry Daere an act of love and courtesy, by pointing out—he himself nought doubting—what might breed doubts in the hearts of other men, regarding the manner of the death of the Lady Catherine Beauchamp, in order that the good knight might make such enquiries as would remove all suspicion. For this cause he marked what he had only learned by hear-say, that Sir Henry Daere had, as unhappily often happened, a fierce quarrel with the Lady Catherine, about a gentleman, it would seem, calling himself Hal

of Hadnock'—Curses upon him!" cried Dacre, breaking off."

"Nay, nay, you do him wrong," answered Richard of Woodville; "he sought but to serve you, as I will tell you anon, Harry. But read on. What says he more?"

"'That Sir Harry quitted the hall in bitter anger,'" continued Dacre, reading; "'and swearing he should go mad with the lady's conduct—' Did I say so?"

Woodville nodded his head, and his friend proceeded, "'That the said Sir Henry, though his house is distant but seven miles, did not reach his own door till the hour of nine, and that the lady came by her death between seven and eight, or thereabout; that Sir Henry's hand was torn when he reached his house; and that there was a stain of blood upon the lady's throat; that there were marks of horses' feet on the opposite side of the river, and across the moor towards Sir Henry's dwelling, and that he himself was seen of many persons wandering about near Abbot's Ann and Dunbury, till dark that night; all of which points Sir Simeon Roydon doubted not,

in any way, could be easily explained by Sir Henry Dacre, if true ; but which, perchance, were untrue ; he, Sir Simeon, having heard them merely from vague report and common fame ! ” “ Some true, some false,” cried Dacre, “ I did tear my hand opening the gate by Clatford mill. I did wander about with a heart on fire, and a brain all whirling, at being made wretched by another’s fault ; but I was far from the village, far from Abbey and Hall, before the sun went down ; for I saw him set from Weyhill.—Ah ! poisonous snake ! He stings and glides away from the heel that would crush him. Hear how he ends : ‘ For his own part, Sir Simeon of Roydon is right well convinced, that Sir Henry Dacre is pure and free of all share in the lady’s death ; otherwise that knight might be full sure he would be the first to call him to the lists, in vengeance of his cousin’s death.’ The scoundrel coward ! But how is this, Richard ? He must have spies in our houses, at our hearths. How else did he gain such tidings ? Who told him of the quarrel between that hapless girl and me ? He was gone long before, I think ? ”

“ Ay, but his servants staid,” replied Woodville ; “ and there was one in the hall when you returned ; that black-looking silent man. Yet he must have some other means of information, too ; else how did he know your hand was torn ?”

“ I cannot say,” answered Dacre thoughtfully. “ By heaven ! he will plant suspicion in my heart, too, and make me doubt the long-tried faithful fellows I have with me ; ” and he cast himself gloomily on a seat, and pondered in silence.

The moment after there was a sound of horses’ feet, passing along before the house ; and Richard of Woodville turned and listened, saying, “ Here is some new messenger. Were it any of my own people, they would come to the other gate.”

After some talking in the hall without, an attendant opened the door and informed his young master, that there was a person without who desired to see him. “ He comes from Westminster,” added the man, “ and will give neither message nor letters to any but yourself, sir.”

“ Let him come in ! ” answered Richard of

Woodville ; and a personage was called forward, habited somewhat differently from any of those whom we have already had occasion to describe. He was dressed in what is called a tabard ; but it must not be supposed from that circumstance, that he bore the office of either herald or pursuivant, for many other classes retained that part of the ancient dress, and it was officially worn by the squires and many of the inferior attendants of kings and sovereign princes, sometimes over armour, sometimes without. In particular cases the tabard was embroidered either with the arms of the lord whom the bearer served, or with his own, as a sort of coat of arms ; but was frequently, especially with persons of somewhat low degree, perfectly unornamented, and formed of a fine cloth of a uniform colour. Such was the case with the man who now appeared, this loose short gown, with wide sleeves, being of a bright pink hue. The linen collar of his shirt fell over it ; and the part of his dress left exposed below the knee, showed nothing but the riding boots of untanned leather, drawn up to their full extent. In person he was a short

thin young man, with a shrewd and merry countenance. His hair was cut short round the whole head, but left thick notwithstanding, so as to resemble a fur cap, and his long arms reached his knees. Without uttering a word he advanced towards Richard of Woodville, who had taken a step forward to receive him, and drawing a packet from the bosom of his tabard, he placed it in the gentleman's hand.

“From Hal of Hadnock, I suspect,” said Woodville, looking at him closely.

“Nay, I know not,” replied the messenger; “from Hal certainly, yet no more Hal of Hadnock, than of Monmouth, or Westminster, or any other town of England or Wales. Read, and you will see.”

Richard of Woodville tore open the outer cover, and took forth several broad letters, tied and sealed. The first he opened, and drawing near the light, perused its contents attentively.

“Hal of Hadnock,” so it ran, “to Richard of Woodville, greeting. Good service requires good service, and honour, honour. Thus you shall find, my comrade of the way, that I

have not forgotten you, though matters of much moment and some grief, have delayed a promise, not put it out of mind. You, too, have doubtless had much cause for thought and sorrow; and may, perchance, have yet affairs to keep you in the realms of England, which being the case, I do not require that you should lay aside things of weight, to bear the enclosed to the noble Duke of Burgundy or his son, and to the faithful servant of this crown, Sir Philip Morgan, now at the court of Burgundy; but the letter addressed to Sir John Grey, at Ghent, is of some importance to himself, and should find his hands as speedily as may be. If, therefore, by any chance, you be minded to stay in England more than fourteen days from the receipt of these, return that packet by the bearer, one Edward Dyram. But, if you be ready to cross the seas ere then, keep the messenger with you in your company, as I believe him to be faithful, and true, and skilled in many things; and he knoweth my mind towards you, which is good. Neither be offended at speech or jest of his, for he

hath a licence not easily bridled ; but so long as he useth his tongue for his own conceit, so long will he use his knowledge for a friend or master. I give him to you ; treat him well till you return him to me again ; and if there be aught else that can serve you or do you grace, seek me at Westminster, where you will find a friend in

HENRY."

Richard of Woodville pondered, but testified no surprise ; and, after a moment's thought, put the letter in the hand of Sir Henry Dacre, who read it through, with more apparent wonder than his friend had expressed. " And who is this ? " he asked, when he had done. " He signs himself, Henry. Can it be the Prince ? "

" The Prince that was, the King that is, " replied Woodville, giving him a sign to say no more before the messenger ; " and so my friend, you are to be my companion over sea ? " he added, turning to the latter.

" That is as you will, not as I will, " replied the man ; " if you are fool enough to quit England in a fortnight, when you can stay a

month, I am to go with you; if you are wise enough to stay, I am wise enough to go alone."

"Ten days I hope at farthest shall see my foot on other shores," answered Woodville; "and pray, Master Edward Dyram, what may be your capacity, quality, or degree? for 'tis fit that I should know, who it is goes with me."

"Ned Dyram, fair sir, by your leave," replied the messenger; "'tis so long since I lost the last half of my first name, that I know it not when I meet it; and I should as much expect my mother's ass to answer me, if I called him Edward as I should answer to it myself. Then, as to my capacity, it is large enough to hold any man's secrets without spilling them by the way, or to contain the knowledge of a Knight, a Baron, and Squire, besides a clerk's and my own, without running over. My chief quality is to tell truth when I like it, and other men do not; and my degree has never been taken yet, though I lived long enough with a doctor of Oxford, to have caught that sickness had it been infectious."

"I fear me, Ned Dyram," said Richard of

Woodville smiling, “ I shall lose much time with you, in getting crooked answers to plain questions ; but if you have puzzled your own brains with logic, puzzle not mine.”

“ Well, well, sir,” answered the other, “ I will be brief, for I am hungry and you are tired. I am the son of a Franklin who broke his heart to make me a clerk. I had, however, no gift for singing, and turned my wits to other things. I can do what men can generally do, and sometimes better than they can. I have broken a man’s head one day, and healed it the next, for I have handled a quarter-staff and served a leech. I can cast nativities, and draw a horoscope ; I can make a horse-shoe and sharpen a sword ; I can write court hand and speak more tongues than my own ; I can cook my own dinner when need be, and bake or brew if the sutler or the tapster should fail me.”

“ A goodly list of qualities, indeed,” said Richard of Woodville, “ and though my household is not the most princely, we will find you an office, Ned Dyram, which you must exer-

cise with discretion ; and now as you are hungry, get you gone to my people who will stop that evil. We have supped."

The messenger withdrew ; and Sir Henry Dacre returned the letter which he still held in his hand to Woodville, saying, " So this was the Prince ? the more cruel in him to sport with the peace of his father's subjects."

" Not so, Dacre," replied his friend. " I told you I could explain his conduct ; and it is but justice to him to do so ; for he intended to be kind, not cruel."

Dacre shook his head gloomily.

" Well, you shall hear," continued Woodville. " When I first brought him to my uncle's gate, I knew not who he was ; but he had scarcely entered the hall, when I remembered him. I kept my own council, however, and said nothing ; but when he sought his room, I went with him as you saw, and there for a whole hour we spoke of those we had left below. I told him nothing, Harry, for his quick eye had gleaned the truth wherever it turned ; and I had only to set him right on some things regarding

the past. He knew you by name, and took interest in your fate as well as mine.—I would fain tell you all; but in the mood in which you are, I fear that I may pain you.”

“ Speak, Dick, speak,” answered the Knight; “ have we not been as brothers since our boyhood, that you may not give me all your thoughts freely? Say all you have to say. Keep nought behind, if you love me; for I have grown as suspicious as the rest, and shall doubt if I see you hesitate.”

“ Well, at all risks,” said Richard of Woodville, “ it is better to give you some pain perhaps, than to leave you with your present thoughts. We talked then, first of myself and Mary Markham, and then of you and Catherine. He saw you loved her not.”—

“ 'Twas her own fault,” cried Dacre: “ she crushed out love that might once have been deep and true.”

“ I told him so,” replied Woodville, “ and he asked why, as you both clearly wished the bond that bound you to each other loosed, you did not apply to the Church and the law to

break it ? I said what perhaps had better not been said, but yet what I believed, that, if you proposed it, she would not consent, for that she loved to keep you as a captive, if not by love's chains, by any other. He fancied, Harry, that, if that incomplete union were dissolved, you might be happy with another—ay, with Isabel."

" Ha !" exclaimed Dacre, " ha ! Have I been so careless of my looks that a mere stranger should—" and he bent down his brow upon his hands, and remained for a moment silent. Then looking up, he added, " Well, Richard, I have been a fool ; but was it possible to stand between a desert and a paradise, and not regret that I could never pass the boundary ; to look into a scene of joy and peace, and not long to rest the weary heart, and cool the aching brow in the calm groves, and pleasant glades before me ? Who would compare those two beings, and not choose between them in spite of fate ?—But what said he more ?"

" He thought you might be happy," answered Woodville, " and that the only barrier

was one that he might prompt Catherine to remove herself. For that object he humoured her caprice, and played with her light vanity. He told me that he would; and I saw that he did so; for his was no heart to be suddenly made captive by one such as Catherine Beauchamp. Besides, it was clear, his words half sweet, half sour, were all aimed at that end; for ever and anon when his tone was full of courteous gallantry, some sharp jest would break through, as if he could not keep down the somewhat scornful thoughts with which her idle vanity moved him."

"Then I did him wrong," answered Dacre, "for had he succeeded and led her to propose of her own will, that our betrothing should be annulled, no boon on all the earth could have been equal to that blessing.—It has turned out sadly; yet I will not blame him; for who can tell when he draws a bowstring in the dark, where the shaft may fall? But say, Richard, was he aware you knew his station?"

"I never told him," replied his friend; "but I think that he divined. You see, in his letter,

that he gives no explanation. But listen, Harry, will it not be better—now that we have spoken freely on this theme—will it not be better I say, for you to return home, let the first memory of these darks days pass away, and seek for happiness with one, who may well make up for all that you have suffered in the past."

"What!" cried Dacre, "with this stain upon my name? Oh, no! that dream of joy is gone.—No, no, my only course is to forget that there is such a thing as love on earth, or to think with your friend Chaucer's lay, that

"—Love ne is in yonge folke but rage,
And is in olde folke a grete dotage,
Who most it usith, he most shal enpaire
For thereof cometh disese and hevinesse
So sorrow and eare, and many a grete sicknesse,
Despite, debate, and angre, and envie,
Depraving shame, untrust, and jelousie,
Pride, mischefe, povertie, and wodeness."

"'Tis the song of the cuckoo, Harry," replied Woodville; "but this sad humour, built upon a baseless dream, will pass away when you find that the suspicions which you now fancy

in every one's heart, live but in your own imagination ; and then you will answer with the nightingale

“ That evirmore Love his servauntes amendeth,
And from all evil tachis them defendeth ;”

but Time must do his own work, and till then, argument is of no avail. Yet I would fain not have you lose bright days with me in foreign lands. Happy were I if I could stay like you in hope, and lead the pleasant summer life, beneath the lightsome looks of her whom I love best. Think of it, Harry, think of it ; and do not rashly judge that you see clear, till you have wiped the dust out of your eyes.”

Dacre shook his head and answered, “ I will to rest, Richard, such as I can find ; for now that I have got this craven's reply, I have no further business here till I join you again upon our pilgrimage. I will away to-morrow to prepare ; but we shall meet before I go.—I know my way.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE CORONATION.

FIVE days after the events related in the last chapter, Richard of Woodville leaving armourers and tailors busy in his house at Meon, rode away for London, accompanied by two yeomen, a page, and Ned Dyram, whose talents had not been long in displaying themselves in the service of his new master. He had instructed the tailors, he had assisted the armourers, he had aided to choose the horses, he had drawn figures for fresh pallettes and pauldrons ; and he had with his own hand manufactured a superb bridle and bit ornamented with gilt steel plates, jesting, laughing, talking, all the while, and overcoming the obstinacy and the vanity of the old artificers, who would

fain have equipped the young gentleman who employed them, in the fashions of the early part of the last reign, all new inventions in those days travelling slowly from the capital to the country. Ned Dyram, however, had been in many lands, and had accumulated, in a head which possessed extraordinary powers both of observation and memory, an enormous quantity of patterns and designs of everything new or strange, which he had seen ; and sometimes with a laugh, sometimes with an argument, he drove those who were inclined to resist all innovation, to adopt his proposed improvements greatly against their will. But though his tongue occasionally ran fast, and he seemed to take a pleasure occasionally in confounding his slower opponents with a torrent of words, yet on all subjects but those immediately before him, he kept his own counsel, and not one of the servants of the house, when he set out with Woodville for London, was aware of who or what he was, whence he came, or where he had gained so much knowledge.

The first day's journey was a long one, and

Richard of Woodville and his train were not many miles from London, when they again set forth early on the following morning, so that it was not yet noon, on the ninth of April, when they approached the city of Westminster, along the banks of the Thames.

Winding in and out through fields and hedge-rows, where now are houses, manufactories, and prisons, with the soft air of Spring breathing upon them, and the scent of the early cowslips, for which that neighbourhood was once famous, rising up and filling the whole air, they came on, now catching, now losing, the view of the large heavy abbey church of Westminster, and its yet unfinished towers of the same height as the main building, while rising tall above it, appeared the belfry of St. Stephen's chapel, with its peaked roof open at the sides, displaying part of the three enormous bells, one of which was said (falsely) to weigh thirty thousand pounds. The top of two other towers might also be seen, from time to time, over the trees, and also part of the buildings of the monastery adjoining the Abbey; but these were soon lost as the lane

which the travellers were following wound round under the west side of Tote-hill, a gentle elevation covered with greensward, and ornamented with clumps of oak and beech and fir, amidst which might be discovered here and there some large stone houses richly ornamented with sculpture, and surrounded with their own gardens. The lanes, the paths, the fields, were filled with groups of people in their holiday costume, all flocking towards Westminster ; and what with the warm sunshine, the greenness of the grass, the tender verdure of the young foliage, and the gay dresses of the people, the whole scene was as bright and lively as it is possible to conceive. At the same time, the loud bells of St. Stephen's began to ring with the merriest tones they could produce, and a distant "hurrah !" came upon the wind.

"Now, Ned, which is the way?" asked Richard of Woodville, calling up his new attendant to his side, as they came to a spot where the lane divided into two branches, one taking the right hand side of the hill, and one the left. "This seems the nearest," he continued

pointing down the former; “but I know nought of the city.”

“The nearest may prove the farthest,” replied Ned Dyram riding up, “as it often does, my master. That is the shortest, good sooth! but they call the shortest often the fool’s way; and we might be made to look like fools if we took it; for though it leads round to the end of St. Stephen’s lane, methinks that to-day none will be admitted to the palace court by that gate, as it is the King’s coronation morning.”

“Indeed!” said Woodville, “I knew not that it was so.”

“Nor I, either,” answered Ned; “but I know it now.”

“And how, pray?” asked his new master.

“By every sight and sound,” replied Ned Dyram; “by that girl’s pink coats, by that good man’s blue cloak, by the bells ringing, by the people running, by the hurrah we heard just now. I ever put all I hear and see together; for a man who only sees one thing at once, will never know what time he is living in.”

“Then we had better turn to the left,” said

Woodville, not caring to hear more of his homily ; “ of course, if this be the coronation day, I shall not get speech of the King till to-morrow ; but we may as well see what is going on.”

“ To the left will lead you right,” replied his quibbling companion, “ that is to say, to the great gate before the palace court ; and then we shall discover whether the King will speak with you or not. Each Prince has his own manners, and our’s has changed so boldly in one day, that no one can judge from that which the lad did, what the man will do.”

“ Has he changed much, then ? ” asked Woodville riding on ; “ it must have been sudden, indeed, if you had time to see it, ere you left him.”

“ Ay, has he ! ” answered Dyram ; “ the very day of his father’s death, he put on not the robes of royalty, but the heart ; and those who were his comrades before, gave place to other men. They who counted much upon his love, found a cold face ; and they who looked for hate, met with nought but grace.”

“Then, perhaps my reception may not be very warm,” said Woodville thoughtfully.

“You may judge yourself, better than I can, master mine,” replied Ned Dyram. “Did you ever sit with him in the tavern drinking quarts of wine?”

“No,” answered Richard of Woodville smiling.

“Then you shall be free of his table,” said Ned. “Did you ever shoot deer with him, by moonlight?”

“Never,” was his master’s reply.

“Then you may chance to taste his venison!” rejoined the man. “Did you ever brawl, swear, and break heads for him, or with him?”

“No, truly,” said the young gentleman, “I fought under him with the army in Wales, when he and I were both but boys; and I led him on his way one dark night, two days before his father died; but that is all I know of him.”

“Then, perchance, you may enter into his council,” answered Dyram; “for, now that he is

royal, he thinks royally, and he judges man for himself, not with the eyes of others."

"As all kings should," said Richard of Woodville.

"And few kings do," rejoined Ned. "I was not so lucky; but many a mad prank have I seen during the last year; and though he knows, and heaven knows, I never prompted what others did, yet I was one of the old garments he cast off, as soon as he put on the new ones. I fared better than the rest, indeed, because I sometimes had told him a rough truth; and trust I shall fare better still, if I do his bidding."

"And what may be his bidding?" asked Richard of Woodville; "for, doubtless, he gave you one, when he sent you to me."

"He bade me live well and forget former days, as he had forgotten them," replied Ned Dyram; "and he bade me serve you well, master, if you took me with you; so you have no cause to think ill of the counsel that he gave me in your case.—But here we are, master mine; and a goodly sight it is to see."

As he spoke they turned into the wide street

or rather road, which led from the village of Charing to the gates of the palace at Westminster ; and a gay and beautiful scene it certainly presented, which ever side the eye turned. To the north was seen the old gothic building (destroyed in the reign of Edward VI.) where the royal falcons were kept, and called from that circumstance the Mew, while a little in advance, upon a spot slightly elevated, stood the beautiful stone cross, one of the monuments of undying regard, erected in the village of Charing, by King Edward the First. To the left appeared the buttery and lodge and other offices of the hospital and convent of St. James's, forming together a large pile of buildings, with gates and arches cutting each other in somewhat strange confusion, while the higher stories, supported by corbels, overhung the lower. The effect of the whole, however, massed together by the distance, was grand and striking, while the trees of the fields, then belonging to the nunnery and afterwards formed into a park, broke the harsher lines and marked the distances down the course of the wide road.

A little nearer, but on the opposite side of the way, with gardens and stairs extending to the river, was the palace or lodging of the Kings of Scotland. The edifice has been destroyed; but the ground has still retained the name which it then bore; and many years had not elapsed, at the time I speak of, since that mansion had been inhabited by the monarchs of the northern part of this island, when they came to take their seats in parliament in right of their English feofs. Gardens succeeded, till appeared, somewhat projecting beyond the line of road, the old stern building which had once been the property of Hubert de Burg, Earl of Kent, more like a fortress than a dwelling, though its gloomy aspect was relieved by a light and beautiful chapel, lately built on the side nearest to Westminster, by one of the Archbishops of York.

Several smaller edifices, sometimes constructed of brick, sometimes of grey stone, were seen on the right and left, all in that peculiar style of architecture so much better fitted to the climate of northern Europe, and the character

of her people, than the light and graceful buildings of the Greeks, which we imitate in the present day, generally with such heavy impotence ; and still between all appeared the green branches of oaks, and beeches, and fields, and gardens, blending the city and the country together.

Up the long vista, thus presented, were visible thousands of groups on horseback and on foot decked out in gay and glittering colours ; and as brilliant a scene displayed itself to the south, in the wide court before the palace, surrounding which appeared, the venerable abbey, the vast hall, the long line of the royal dwelling, the monastery, the chapel of St. Stephen, with its tall belfry and many another tower and lofty archway, and the old church of St. Margaret, built about a century and a half before, together with the lofty yet heavy buildings of the Woolstaple, and the row of arches underneath. Banners and pennons fluttering in the wind ; long gowns of monks and secular clergymen ; tabards and mantles of every hue under the sun ; the robes and head-dresses of the ladies and their

women, and the gorgeous trappings of the horses catching the light as they moved hither and thither, rendered the line from the Eleanor cross to the palace, one living rainbow ; while the river, flowing gently on upon the east, was covered with boats, all tricked out with streamers and fluttering ribbons. Even the grave, the old, and those dedicated to seclusion and serious thought, seemed to have come forth for this one day ; and, amongst the crowd, might be distinguished more than one of the long grey, black, or white gowns, with the coif and veil which marked the nun. All seemed gay, however ; and nothing was heard but laughter, merriment, gay jests, the ringing of the bells, the sounding of clarions, and, every now then, the deep tone of the organ, through the open windows of the abbey, or a wild burst of martial music from the lesser court of the palace.

Habited in black as mourning for his unhappy cousin, Richard of Woodville felt himself hardly fitted for so gay a scene ; but his good mien and courteous carriage, gained him many a civil word as he moved along, or per-

chance some shrewd jest, as the frank simplicity of those days allowed.

“Where is the black man going?” cried a pert London apprentice; “he must be chief mourner for the dead king.”

“Nay, he is fair enough to look upon, Tom,” replied a pretty girl by his side. “You would give much to be as fair.”

“Take care of my toes, master,” exclaimed a stout citizen, “your horse is mettlesome.”

“He shall not hurt you, good sir,” replied Woodville.

“Let me hold by your leg, sir squire,” said a woman near, “so shall I have a stout prop.”

“Blessings on his fair good-natured face,” cried an old woman, “he has lost his lady, I will wager my life.”

“You have not much there to lose, good mother,” answered a man behind her.

“Well, he will soon find another lady,” rejoined a buxom dame, who seemed of the same party, “if he takes those eyes to court.”

“Out on it, master,” exclaimed a man who had been amusing the people round him by

bad jokes, “is your horse a cut purse? He had his nose in my pouch.”

“Where he found nothing, I dare say,” answered Woodville; and in the midst of the peal of laughter which followed from the easily moved multitude, he made his way forward to the gates, where he was stopped by a wooden barrier drawn across and guarded by a large posse of the royal attendants, habited in their coats of ceremony.

“What now? what now?” asked one of the jacks of office, with a large mace in his hand, as Woodville rode up; “you can have no entrance here, sir squire, if you be not of the King’s house, or have not an order from one of his lords. The court is crowded already. The King will not have room to pass back.”

Before his master could answer, however, Ned Dyram pushed forward his horse, and addressed the porter, saying, in a tone of authority, “Up with the barrier, Master Robert Nes- enham. ’Tis a friend of the King’s, for whom he sent me—Master Richard of Woodville,—you know the name.”

“ That’s another affair, Ned,” replied the other ; “ but let me see, are not you on the list of those who must not come to court ?”

“ Not I,” replied Ned Dyram ; “ or if I be you have put me on yourself, Robin ; ‘tis but the other day I left his Grace upon this errand.”

“ Well, come in if it be so, varlet,” replied the porter, lifting the barrier ; “ but if you come forbidden, the pillory and your ears will be acquainted. How many men of you are there ?—Stand back, fellows, or I will break your pates. See, Tim, there is a fellow slipping through ! Drive him back,—give him a throw,—cast him over,—break his neck,—five of you, that is all ?—stand back, fellows, or you shall into limbo.”

While the good man strove with the crowd without, who all struggled manfully to push through the barrier when it was open, Richard of Woodville and his followers made their way on into the court ; and, dismounting from his horse in the more open space which it afforded, he advanced towards the passage which was kept clear by the royal officers, between the

door of the great hall and the Abbey. At first he was placed near a stout man dressed as a wealthy citizen ; and he inquired of him how long the King had been in the church.

“ Three parts of an hour,” replied the other ; “ did you not hear the shout and the bells begin to ring ? Oh ! it was a grand sight ! There was—” but the rest of what he said was drowned by the noise around, aided by a loud flourish of trumpets from the hall.

The crowd, however, was constantly changing, and swaying to and fro ; and Woodville soon found himself separated from the man to whom he had spoken, by two or three of the secular clergy of the city, and a somewhat coquettish looking nun, who wore over her grey gown a blue ribbon and a silver cross.

She turned round and looked at him with her veil up, showing a very pretty face, and a pair of bright blue eyes. A fat monk was behind, and a man dressed as a scrivener ; but all were intent upon watching the door of the Abbey, as if they expected the royal procession soon to reappear ; and Woodville turned his eyes

thither also. The next moment he heard a voice pronounce his own name, and then add, “ Beware of Simeon of Roydon ; and let not Henry Dacre fight with him.”

Richard turned sharply round and gazed at those behind him ; but he saw no face that he knew, but those of Ned Dyram and one of his own men. The rest of the group in his immediate neighbourhood was composed of two monks, another nun, a doctor of divinity in his cope, a tall man in a surcoat of arms, and two elderly ladies with portentous head-dresses, a full half yard broad and two foot high.

It was a woman’s voice, however, that he had heard, and he enquired at once of the nearest woman, “ Did you speak, lady ? ”

“ To be sure I did,” answered the good dame, in a sharp tone ; “ I asked my brother what the hour is. No offence in that, sir, I suppose ? ”

“ Oh, none, assuredly,” replied Richard of Woodville ; “ but I thought you mentioned my name.”

“ I do not know it, young sir,” replied the lady ; “ come away, brother, the squire is

saucy ;" and she and her party moved on, making a complete change in the disposition of the group.

In vain Richard of Woodville looked beyond the little circle in which they stood ; he could see no face that he knew ; and at length, turning to Ned Dyram, he inquired if he had heard any one mention his name.

" That good dame, or some one near her certainly did," replied the man ; " but I could not see exactly who it was.—It might be the other woman."

" Was she old, too ?" demanded Woodville.

" Too old for your wife, and too young for your mother," answered Ned, " somewhat on the touch of forty years."

As he spoke there was a loud " hurrah !" from the ground adjacent to the abbey door ; a true, hearty, English shout, such as no other nation on the earth can give, and the royal procession was seen returning. All pressed as near as they could ; and Richard of Woodville gained a place in front, where he waited calmly, uncovered, for the passing of the King.

On came the train, bishops and abbots, priests and nobles, the pages, the knights, the bearers of the royal emblems; but all eyes were turned to one person, as—with a step, not haughty, but calm and firm, such as might well accord with a heart fixed and confident to keep the solemn vows so lately made in scrupulous fidelity; with a brow elevated by high and noble purposes, more than by the splendour of the crown it bore; and with an eye lightening with genius and soul—Henry of Monmouth returned towards his palace, amidst the gratulating acclamations of his people.

Richard of Woodville saw Hal of Hadnock in the whole bearing of the monarch, as he had seen the Prince in the bearing of Hal of Hadnock, and he murmured to himself, “He is the same. ‘Tis but the dress is altered, either in mind or body. Excluded from the tasks of royalty, he assumed a less noble guise; but still the man was the same.”

As he thus thought, the King passed before him, looking to right and left upon the long lines of people that bordered his way, though,

marching in his state, he distinguished no one by word or gesture. His eyes, indeed, fixed firmly for an instant upon Richard of Woodville, and a slight smile passed over his lip ; but he went on without farther notice ; and the young gentleman turned, as soon as he had gone by, thinking, “ I will seek some inn, and come to the palace to-morrow. To-day, it is in vain.”

The pressure of the multitude, however, prevented him from moving for some time, and he was forced to remain till the whole of the procession had gone by. He then made his way out of the crowd, which gradually became less compact, though few retired altogether, the greater number waiting either to discuss the events of the day, or to see if any other amusements would be afforded to the people ; but it was some time before the young gentleman could find his horses, for the movements of the people had forced them from the place where they had been left. Just as he was, at length, putting his foot in the stirrup, Ned Dyram pulled his sleeve, saying, “ There is a King’s page, my master, looking for some one in the

crowd. Always give yourself a chance. It may be you he seeks."

"I think not," replied Richard of Woodville; "but you can join him and inquire, if you will."

The man instantly ran off at full speed; and, though soon forced to slacken his pace amongst the people, he in the end reached the page and asked for whom he was looking.

"A gentleman in black," replied the boy, "named Richard of Woodville."

"Then there he is," answered Ned, pointing with his hand to where his master stood; and, followed by the page, he walked quickly to the spot.

"If your name be Richard of Woodville, sir," said the boy, "the King will see you now, while he his putting off his heavy robes and taking some repose."

"I follow, young sir," replied Woodville; and, accompanying the page, he turned towards the palace, while Ned Dyrham, after a moment's hesitation, pursued the same course as his master, "in order," as he said mentally, "always to give himself a chance."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAY OF FESTIVAL.

CROSSING through the great hall of the palace of Westminster, where so many a varied scene has been enacted in the course of English history, where joy and sorrow, mirth, merriment, pageantry, fear, despair, and the words of death, have passed for well nigh a thousand years, and do pass still, Richard of Woodville followed the page amidst tables and benches, serving-men, servers, guards, and ushers, till they reached a small door at the left angle, which, when opened, displayed the first steps of a small stone staircase. Up these they took their way, and then, through a corridor thronged with attendants, past the open door of a large room on the right, in which mitres and robes, crosses and swords of state, met

the young gentleman's eye, to a door at the end, which the page opened. Within was a small antechamber containing several squires and pages in their tabards, waiting either in silence, or at most talking to each other in whispers. They made way for their comrade, and the gentleman he brought with him, to pass, and, approaching an opposite door, the boy knocked. No one answered ; but the door was immediately opened ; and Richard of Woodville was ushered into a bedchamber, where, seated in a large chair, he found the King, attended by two men dressed in their habits of state. One of these had just given the visitor admission ; but the other was engaged in pulling off the boots in which the monarch had walked to and from the abbey, and in placing a pair of embroidered shoes upon his feet instead.

“ Welcome, Richard of Woodville,” said Henry, as soon as he beheld him ; “ so you have come to see Hal of Hadnock before you depart ? ”

“ I have come to see my gracious Sovereign, Sire,” replied Woodville, advancing and bending

the knee to kiss his hand, “ and to wish him health and long life to wear his crown, for his own honour and the happiness of his people.”

“ Nay, rise, Richard, rise,” said Henry smiling kindly, “ no court ceremonies here. And I will tell you, my good friend, that I do really believe, there is not one of all those who have shouted on my path to-day, or sworn to support my throne, who more sincerely wishes my prosperity than yourself. But say, did you guess, that Hal of Hadnock was the Prince of Wales ? ”

“ I knew it, Sire,” replied Woodville, “ from the first moment you entered my uncle’s hall. I had served under your Grace’s command in Wales.”

“ I suspected as much,” replied the monarch, “ from some words you let fall.”

“ I do beseech you, Sire, to pardon me,” continued Richard, “ if I judged my duty wrongly; but I thought that so long as it was not your pleasure to give yourself your own state, it was my part, to know you only as you seemed.”

“ And you did right, my friend,” replied

the King ; “ but were you not tempted to breathe the secret to any one — not even to Mary Markham ? ”

“ To no one, Sire,” answered Woodville boldly, “ not for my right hand, would I have said one word to the best friend I had.”

“ You are wise and faithful, Richard of Woodville,” said Henry gravely ; “ God send me many such.”

“ Here is the other mantle, Sire,” said the attendant who was dressing him, “ will you permit me to unclasp that ? ”

Henry rose, and the man disengaged the royal mantle from his shoulders, replacing it with one less heavy, while the King continued his conversation with Woodville after a momentary interruption, repeating, “ God send me many such ; for if I judge rightly, I shall have need of strong arms, and wise heads, and noble hearts about me. Nor shall I fail to call for yours when I have need, my friend.”

“ Ah, Sire,” answered Woodville with a smile, “ as far as a true heart and a strong arm may go, I can, perhaps, serve you ; but for

wise heads, I fear you must look elsewhere. I am but a singer of songs, you know, and a lover of old ballads."

"Like myself, Richard," replied Henry; "but none the worse for that. I know not why, but I always doubt the man that is not fond of music. 'Tis, perhaps, that I love it so well myself, that I cannot but think, he who does not, has some discordant principle in his heart that jars with sweet sounds. 'Tis to me a great refreshment also; and when I have been sad or tired with all this world's business, when my thoughts have grown misty, or my brain turned giddy, I have sat me down to the organ and played for a few moments till all has become clear again; and I have risen as a man does from a calm sleep. As for poesy, indeed, I love it well enough, but I am no poet;—and yet I think that a truly great poet is more powerful, and has a wider empire, than a King. We monarchs rule men's bodies while we live; but their minds are beyond that sceptre, and death ends all our power. The poet rules their hearts, moulds their minds to

his will, and stretches his arm over the wide future. He arrays the thoughts of countless multitudes for battle on the grand field of the world, and extends his empire to the end of time. Look at Homer,—has not the song of the blind Greek its influence yet? and so shall the verse of Chaucer be heard in years to come, long after the brow they have this day crowned shall have mouldered in the grave."

The thoughts which he had himself called up, seemed to take entire possession of the King, and he remained gazing in deep meditation for a few minutes upon the glittering emblems of royalty which lay upon the table before him, while Richard of Woodville stood silent by his side, not venturing to interrupt his reverie.

"Well, Richard," continued the King, at length rousing himself, "so you go to Burgundy? but hold yourself ready to join me when I have need."

"I am always ready, now or henceforward, Sire," answered the young gentleman, "to serve you with the best of my poor ability; and the day will be a happy one that calls me to you.

I only go to seek honour in another land, because I had so resolved before I met your Highness, and because you yourself pronounced it best for me."

"And so I think it still," replied Henry. "I would myself advance you, Woodville, but for two reasons; first, I find every office near my person filled with old and faithful servants of the crown; and as they fall vacant, I would place in them men who have themselves won renown. Next, I think it better that your own arm and your own judgment, should be your prop, rather than a King's favour; and as yet, there is here no opportunity. Besides, there are many other reasons why you will do well to go, in which I have not forgotten your own best interests. But keep yourself clear of long engagement to a foreign Prince, lest your own should need you."

"That I most assuredly will, Sire," answered Richard of Woodville. "I go but to take service as a volunteer, holding myself free to quit it when I see meet. I ask no pay from any one; and if I gain honour or reward, it

shall be for what I have done, not for what I am to do."

" You are right, you are right," said Henry ; " but have you anything to ask of me ?"

" Nothing, Sire," replied the young gentleman. " I did but wish to pay reverence to your state, and thank you for the gracious letters you have given me, before I went ;" and he took a step back as if to retire. But Henry made a sign, saying, " Stop ! yet a moment ; I have something to ask you.—Lay the gloves down there, Surtis. Tighten this point a little, and then retire with Baynard."

The attendants did as they were bid ; and Henry then inquired, " What of Sir Henry Dacre, and of that dark evening's work at which we were present ?"

" Dacre goes with me, Sire," replied Richard of Woodville.

" Ha ! " exclaimed the King, " then were we wrong in thinking he loved the other ?"

" Not so," answered Woodville ; " 'tis a sad tale, Sire. He does love Isabel, I am sure—has long loved her, though struggling hard against

such thoughts. But, as if to mar his whole happiness, that scoundrel Roydon, whom you saw, when informed of poor Kate's death, wrote though he did not come, raising doubts as to whether her fate had been accidental."

"Doubts!" cried the King. "Do you entertain no doubts, Richard?"

"Many, Sire," answered the young gentleman; "but I never mention doubts that I cannot justify by proof, and will not support with my arm. But he did more; he pointed suspicion at one he knew too well to be innocent. He called up some accidental circumstances affecting Dacre—not as charges indeed, but as matters of inquiry; made the wound and left the venom, but shrunk from the result."

"And what did Dacre?" asked the King.

"Gave him the lie, Sire," replied Woodville; "called upon him to come boldly forward, make his accusation, and support it in the lists."

"He avoided that, I'll warrant," replied Henry; "I know him, Richard."

"He did so, Sire," answered the young gen-

tleman, “he declared he had no accusation to bring, held Daere to be good Knight and true ; but still kept his vague insinuations forward in view, as things that he mentions solely because it would be satisfactory to the Knight himself to clear up whatever is obscure.”

“ And does the Lady Isabel give any credence, then, to these cowardly charges ? ” inquired the King.

“ Oh ! no, Sire,” replied Woodville warmly. “ She has known Harry Dacre from her infancy ; and those who have, are well aware that, though quick in temper, he is as kind as the May wind — as true and pure as light. But Daere is miserable. He thinks that, henceforth, the finger of suspicion will be pointed at him for ever ; he sees imaginary doubts and dreads in every one’s heart towards him ; he feels the mere insinuation, as the first stain upon a high and noble name. It weighs upon him like a captive’s chain ; he cannot break it or get free — it binds his very heart and soul ; and, casting all hope and happiness behind him, he is resolved to go and peril life itself

in any rash enterprise that fortune may present."

"Poor man!" exclaimed Henry, "I can well understand his feelings: but God will bring all things to light. Yet, tell me, Richard of Woodville, do your own suspicions point in no particular direction?—have you no doubts of any one?"

"Perhaps I have, Sire," answered Woodville; "but I will beseech your Highness to grant me one of two things—either, to appoint a day and hour where, in fit lists and with arms at outrance, I may sustain my words to the death; or do not ask me to make a charge which I can support with no other proof than my right hand."

"I understand you, Richard," said the King, "and I will ask no farther. Your course is a just one; but I trust, and am sure, that heaven will not witness such deeds as have been done, without sending punishment. We both think of the same person, I know; and my eye is upon him. Tell me, however, one thing,—does not Sir Simeon of Roydon inherit the estates of this poor Lady Catherine?"

“ He does, Sire, and is already in possession,” replied Woodville.

“ He is here at the court,” rejoined the King, “ and I shall show him favour for her sake.”

Richard of Woodville gazed at the monarch in surprise, but a slight smile curled Henry’s lip ; and, although he gave no explanation of the words which he had spoken in a grave tone, his young companion was satisfied.

“ I always love to get at the heart of a mystery,” continued the King, seeing that Richard remained silent ; “ and I should much like to know, if you can tell me, what was the cause of that furious quarrel which took place between Sir Henry Dacre and this unhappy lady, just before he went ? I fear I had some share in it.”

“ You were but the drop, Sire, that overflowed the cup,” replied Woodville ; “ it had been near the brim for several days before : but what was said, I know not. Remonstrance upon his part, and cutting sneers on hers, as usual, I suppose : but he has never told me.”

Henry mused for a moment at this reply ;

and then, changing the subject, he inquired, “Is good Ned Dyram with you here in Westminster?”

“He is in the hall below, Sire,” answered Woodville; “and a most useful gift has he been to me already.”

“A loan, Richard, a loan!” cried the King; “I shall claim him back one of these days, after he has served you in Burgundy. You will find he has faults as well as virtues; so have an eye to correct them. But even now, as the country folk say, I have a mind to borrow my own horse. I want his services for three days, if you will lend him to me—You are not yet ready to set out?”

“Not yet, Sire,” replied Woodville; “but, in one week more, I hope to be on the sea.”

“Well, then, send the man up to me, and he shall rejoin you in four days,” answered Henry; “but let me see you to-morrow, my good friend, before you go home, for I would fain talk farther with you. It is seldom that a King can meet one, with whom he can speak his thoughts plainly, and I find already a dif-

ference that makes me sad. Command and obedience, arguments of state and policy, flattering acquiescence in my opinion whether right or wrong, praise, broad and coarse, or neat and half concealed,—of these I can have plenty, and to surfeit; but a friend into whose bosom one can pour forth one's ideas without restraint, whether they be sad or gay, is a rare thing in a court. So, for the present, fare you well, Richard. You will stay here for the banquet in the hall, of course; and let me see you to-morrow morning, towards the hour of eight."

Richard of Woodville, as he well might, felt deeply gratified at the confidence which the King's words implied, and he answered, "I will not fail, Sire, to attend you at that hour, with more gratitude for your good opinion than any other favour. At the banquet, I will try to find a place, and will send Ned Dyram to you. Will you receive him now?"

"Yes, at once," replied the King; "for, good faith! these lords and bishops who are

waiting for me, will think me long. I will order you a place below ; but, mark me, Richard—if you meet Simeon of Roydon, seek no quarrel with him ; and lay my commands upon Sir Henry Dacre, that he do not, on any pretence, again call him to the lists, without my knowledge and consent. As to Ned Dyram, he shall rejoin you soon. There is no way in which he may not be useful to you ; for there is scarce an earthly chance for which his ready wit is not prepared. I met him first studying alchemy with a poor wretch who, in pursuit of science, had blown all his wealth up the chimney of his furnace, and could no longer keep this boy. I found him next in an armourer's shop, hammering at hard iron, and thence I took him. He has a thousand qualities, some bad, some good. I think him honest ; but his tongue is somewhat too free ; and that which the wild Prince might laugh at, might not chime with the dignity of the crown. He will learn better in your train ; but, at the present, I have an errand for him —so send him to me quickly."

Richard of Woodville bowed and withdrew ; and, finding his way down to the hall, he called Ned Dyram,—who was in full activity, aiding the royal officers to set out the tables,—and told him to go directly to the King. The man laughed, and ran off to fulfil the command ; and about three quarters of an hour elapsed before the monarch appeared in the hall, which, by that time, was nearly filled with guests invited to the banquet. He was followed by the train of high nobles and churchmen, whom Woodville had seen waiting in a chamber above ; and the numerous tables, which were as many as that vast building could contain, were soon crowded.

It would be dull to the reader, were I to give any account of a mere ordinary event, such as a royal feast of those days—were I to tell the number of oxen and sheep that were consumed—the capons, ducks, geese, swans, and peacocks that appeared upon the board. Suffice it, that one of the royal servants placed Richard of Woodville according to his rank ; that the banquet, with all its ceremonies, was some-

what long in passing, but that the young gentleman's comfort was not disturbed by the sight of Simeon of Roydon, who, if he were in the hall, kept himself from Richard's eyes. The lower part of the chamber was filled with minstrels, musicians, and attendants ; and music as usual accompanied the feast ; but, ever and anon, from the court before the palace and the neighbouring streets, were heard loud shouts, and laughter, and bursts of song, showing that the merriment and revelry of the multitude were still kept up, while the King and his nobles were feasting within.

Thus, when the banquet was over, the monarch gone from the hall, and Richard of Woodville, with the rest of the guests, issued forth into the court, he was not surprised to find a gay and joyous scene without, the whole streets and roads filled with people, and every one giving himself up to joy and diversion. The gates of the court were thrown open, the populace admitted to the very doors of the palace, and a crowd of several hundred persons assembled round a spot in the centre, where

a huge pile of dry wood had been lighted for the august ceremony of roasting an ox whole, which was duly superintended by half a dozen white-capped cooks, with a whole army of scullions and turnspits. Butts of strong beer stood in various corners; and a fountain, of four streams, flowed with wine at the side next to the Abbey. In one spot, people were jostling and pushing each other to get at the ale or wine; in another, they were dancing gaily to the sound of a viol; and further on was a tumbler, twisting himself into every sort of strange attitude for the amusement of the spectators. Loud shouts and exclamations, peals of laughter, the sounds of a thousand different musical instruments playing as many different tunes, with voices singing and others crying wares of several sorts, prepared for the celebration of the day, made a strange and not very melodious din; but there was an air of festivity and rejoicing, of fun and good humour, in the whole, that compensated for the noise and the crowd.

Richard of Woodville had given orders for

his horses to be taken to an inn at Charing, while waiting in the hall before the banquet ; and he now proceeded on foot, through the crowd in the palace courts, towards the gates. It was a matter of some difficulty to obtain egress ; for twilight was now coming on, and the multitude were flocking from the sights which had been displayed in the more open road to Charing during the last two or three hours, to witness the roasting of the ox, and to obtain some of the slices which were to be distributed about the hour of nine.

At length, however, he found himself in freer air ; but still, every four or five yards, he came upon a gay group, either standing and talking to each other, or gathered round a show, or some singer or musician. It was one constant succession of faces ; some young, some old, some pretty, some ugly, but all of them strange to Richard of Woodville. Nevertheless, more than once he met the same merry salutations which he had been treated to when on horseback ; and, as he paused here and there, gazing at this or that gay party, he was twice asked

to join in the dance, and still more frequently required to contribute to the payment of a poor minstrel with his pipe or cithern.

The minstrels were not, indeed, in those days at least, a very elevated race of beings ; their poetical powers, if they ever in this country possessed any, had entirely merged in the musical ; and, though they occasionally did sing to their own instruments or to those of others, the verses were generally either old ballads, or pieces of poetry composed by persons of a higher education than themselves.

Nearly opposite the old dwelling of the kings of Scotland, Woodville's ear caught the tones of a very sweet voice singing ; and, approaching the group of people that had gathered round, he saw an old man playing on an instrument somewhat like, but greatly inferior to a modern guitar, while a girl by his side, with fine features, and apparently—for the light was faint—a beautiful complexion, dressed in somewhat strange costume, was pouring forth her lay to the delighted ears of youths and maidens. She had nearly finished the song when the

young gentleman approached ; and, in a moment or two after, she went round with a cap in her hand, asking the donations of the listeners.

Woodville had been pleased, and he threw in some small silver coin, more than equal to all that the rest had given ; and, resuming her place by the old man's side, she whispered a word in his ear, upon which he immediately struck his instrument again, and she began another ditty in honour, it would appear, of her generous auditor.

SONG.

The bark is at the shore,
The wind is in the sail,
Fear not the tempest's roar,
There's fortune in the gale ;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

Oh, go'st thou far or nigh,
To Palestine or France,
For thee soft hearts shall sigh,
And glory wreath thy lance ;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

The courtly hall or field,
Still luck shall thee afford ;
Thy heart shall be thy shield,
And love shall edge thy sword ;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

The lark shall sing on high,
Whatever shores thou rov'st ;
The nightingale shall try,
To call up her thou lov'st ;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

In hours of pain and grief,
If such thou must endure,
Thy breast shall know relief,
In honour tried and pure ;
For the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

And Fortune soon or late,
Shall give the jewell'd prize ;
For deeds, in spite of fate,
Gain smiles from ladies' eyes ;
And the true heart and kind,
Its recompence shall find,
Shall win praise,
And golden days,
And live in many a tale.

The song was full of hope and cheerfulness ; and though the melody was simple, as all music was in those days, it went happily with the words. Richard of Woodville well understood that, though certainly not an improvisation, the verse was intended for him ; and feeling grateful to the girl for her promises of success, he drew forth his purse and held out to her another piece of money. She stepped gracefully forward to receive it, and this time extended a fair small hand instead of the cap which she had before borne round the crowd ; but just at that moment, a party of horsemen came up at full gallop, and, as if for sport—probably under the influence of wine—rode fiercely through the little circle assembled to hear the song.

The listeners, young and active, easily got out of the way ; but not so the old minstrel, who stood still as if bewildered, and was knocked down and trampled by one of the horsemen. The girl, his companion, with a shriek, and Richard of Woodville with a cry of indignation, started forward together ; and

the latter catching the horse which had done the mischief by the bridle, with his powerful arm, forced it back upon its haunches, throwing the rider to the ground with a heavy fall. As the man went down his hood was cast back, and Woodville beheld the face of Simeon of Roydon. But he paused not to notice him farther, instantly turning to raise the old man, and endeavouring to support him. The poor minstrel's limbs had no strength, however, and fearing that he was much hurt, the young gentleman exclaimed, “Good Heaven ! why did you not get out of their way ?”

The old man made no answer ; but the girl replied wringing her hands, “Alas ! he is blind !”

“ Let us bear him quick to some hospital,” said Richard ; “ he is stunned.—Who will aid to carry him ?”

“ I will, sir, I will,” answered half-a-dozen voices from the crowd, and the old minstrel was immediately raised in the arms of three or four stout young men, and carried towards the neighbouring nunnery and hospital of St. James’s, accompanied by his fair companion.

Woodville was about to follow, but Sir Simeon of Roydon who had by this time regained his saddle, thrust himself in the way, saying, in a fierce and bitter tone, “Richard of Woodville, I shall remember this.”

“And I shall not forget it, Simeon of Roydon,” replied the other, hardly able to refrain from punishing him on the spot; “Get thee hence! Thou hast done mischief enough.”

The Knight was about to reply; but a shout of execration burst from the people, and, at the same moment, a stone flung from an unseen hand, struck him on the face, cutting his cheek severely, and shaking him in the saddle. His companions alarmed at what they had done, had already ridden on; and, seeing that he was likely to fare ill in the hands of the crowd, Roydon put spurs to his horse, and galloped after them, muttering curses as he went.

Richard of Woodville soon overtook the little party which was hurrying on with the injured man to the lodge of the monastery, and found the poor girl weeping bitterly.

“Alas! noble sir,” she said as soon as she saw him, “he is dead!—He does not speak—his head falls back.”

“I trust not, I trust not,” answered Woodville, “he is but stunned, probably by the blow, and will soon recover.”

She shook her head mournfully; and the next moment one of the young men who had taken up the old man’s cithern, stepped forward before the rest and rang the bell at the gate of the nunnery. It was opened instantly, and Woodville briefly explained to the porter what was the matter.

“Bring him in here,” said the old man; “we will get help. The good prioress is skilful at such things; and brother Martin still more so, and he is nearest; for the monk’s lodging is only just below there. Let one of the men run down and ask for brother Martin.”

In the meantime, the old minstrel was brought in, and laid upon the pallet in the porter’s room; and the news of the accident having spread, the lodge was speedily filled with

nuns having their veils down, all eagerly inquiring what had happened.

The prioress and brother Martin appeared at the same moment; and, in answer to their questions, Woodville explained the facts of the case; for the poor girl, overwhelmed with grief, was kneeling by her old companion's side and holding a small ebony cross which she wore round her neck to his motionless lips.

“ Give us room, my child! give us room,” said brother Martin, putting his hand kindly on her shoulder; and, having obtained access to the pallet, he and the prioress proceeded to examine what injuries the poor old man had received. Their search was short, however; for, after feeling the back of the head with his hand, and then putting his fingers on the pulse, the good monk turned round with a grave countenance, saying, “ God have mercy on his soul; for to him, has it gone.”

The poor singer covered her eyes with her hands and sobbed bitterly. All the rest were silent for a moment; and then Richard of

Woodville, turning to the prioress, said in a low voice, “ I will beseech you, lady, to see in all charity to this poor man’s interment ; and that masses be said in your chapel for his soul. Also, if you would, like a good Christian, take some heed of this poor girl, who is his daughter, I suppose, I should be glad, for it may better become you than me ; but whatever expense the convent may be at, I will repay, though Heaven knows, I am not over rich. My name is Richard of Woodville ; and to-morrow, if you will send a messenger to me, I shall be found at the Acorn, just beyond the Bishop of Durham’s lodging. You must send before eight, however, or after ten ; for at eight I am to be with the King.”

The prioress bowed her head, saying simply, “ I will,” and Woodville turned to depart ; but the poor girl who had heard his words, started up, and catching his hand, pressed her lips upon it ; then knelt by the pallet again, and seemed to pray.

Without farther words, Woodville quitted the lodge ; the porter hurried on to open the

gates ; and the young gentleman went out with the people who had borne or accompanied the poor old minstrel thither. Just as he had reached the road, however, he heard a voice say, “Richard of Woodville, farewell ; and remember !”

He started and turned round ; but though it was a female voice that spoke, there were none but men around him ; and at the same moment the gate rolled heavily to.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SICK MIND.

WE must return, dear reader, for a short time to the scenes in which our tale first began, and to the old hall of the good knight of Dunbury. Richard of Woodville and Sir Henry Dacre had been absent for two days upon their journey to another part of Hampshire, where we have shown somewhat of their course; and Sir Philip Beauchamp sat by the fire meditating, while his daughter Isabel and fair Mary Markham were seated near, plying busily the needle through the embroidery frame, and not venturing to disturb his reverie even by whispered conversation. From time to time, the old man muttered a few sentences to himself, of which the two ladies could only catch detached fragments, such as “They must know

by this time,—Dacre could not but do so,—I am sure 'tis for that,—” and several similar expressions, showing that his mind was running upon the expedition of his nephew and his friend, in regard to the object of which neither Isabel nor Mary had received any information.

It must not be said, however, that they did not suspect anything; for the insinuations of Sir Simeon of Roydon had been told them; and—though neither weak nor given to fear, a knight's daughter, in a chivalrous age—Isabel could not help looking forward with feelings of awe, and an undefinable sinking of the heart, to the events which were likely to follow. She fully believed that she experienced, and had ever experienced, towards Sir Henry Dacre, but one class of sensations,—regard for his high character and noble heart, and pity for the incessant grief and anxiety which her cousin's conduct had brought upon him from his early youth. But such feelings are very treacherous guides, and lead us far beyond the point at which they tell us they will stop. With her, too, they had had every opportunity

of so doing, for she trusted to them in full confidence. Hers had been the task also of soothing and consoling him under all he had suffered—a dangerous task, indeed, for one young, kind, gentle, and enthusiastic, to undertake towards a man whom she admired and respected. But then, they had known each other from infancy, she thought ; they had grown up together like brother and sister, and the tie between them had only been brought nearer by the betrothing of Dacre to her cousin.

Had a doubt ever entered into Isabel's mind, since Catherine's death, it may be askéd, in regard to her own feelings towards Dacre ? Perhaps it might ; but, if so, it had been banished instantly ; and she looked upon the very thought, as a wrong to her own motives. She would never suffer such a thing, she fancied, to trouble her again. “ Dacre had loved Catherine—surely he had loved her ; and yet—” but fresh doubts arose ; and Isabel, willing to be blind, still turned to other meditations.

Mary Markham, on the other hand, with less cause for anxiety, and no motive for shut-

ting her eyes, saw more clearly and judged more accurately. She knew that Isabel Beau-champ loved Harry Dacre, and believed she had loved him long, though she did her full justice, and was confident that her fair companion was as ignorant of what was in her own bosom, as of the treasures beneath the waves. But Mary felt certain that such was not the case with Dacre in regard to his own sensations. She had marked his eye when it turned upon Isabel, had seen the faint smile that came upon his lip when he spoke to her, and had observed the struggle which often took place, when inclination led him to seek her society, and the thought of danger and of wrong held him back,—a struggle in which love had been too often victorious. She doubted not, that he was gone to call upon Simeon of Roydon to come forward with proof of his charges, or to sustain them with the lance ; and, though she entertained little doubt of the issue of such a combat, if it took place, she felt grieved and anxious both for Isabel and Dacre.

There are some men whose native character,

notwithstanding every artifice to conceal it, will penetrate through all disguises, and produce sensations which seem unreasonable, even to those who feel them without being able to trace them to their source. Such a one was Sir Simeon of Roydon. He had never been seen by any of Sir Philip Beauchamp's family to commit any base or dishonest act ; and yet there was not one in all that household, from the old knight to the horse-boy, who did not internally believe him to be capable of every crafty knavery. His insinuations, therefore, in regard to Sir Henry Dacre, passed by as empty air, at least for the time ; but all had, nevertheless, a strong conviction on their minds, that the doubts he had attempted to raise would rankle deep in the heart of their unhappy object, and poison the whole course of his existence, unless some fortunate event were to bring to light the real circumstances of poor Catherine Beauchamp's death.

The whole party, then, were in a sad and gloomy mood ; and even the gay, young spirit of Mary Markham was clouded, as they sat

round the fire in the great hall, on one of those April evenings when, after a day of summer sunshine, chilly winter returns with his fit companion, night.

As they were thus seated, however, each busy with his own thoughts, the sound of horses' feet in the court was heard, and, in a minute after, Dacre himself entered. He mounted the steps at the end of the pavement with a slow pace, and every eye was turned to his countenance to gather some indication from his look of the state of mind in which he returned. The old knight rose and grasped his hand, asking, in a low voice, "What news, Harry? Nay, boy, you need not strive to conceal it from me—I know what you went for. Will the slanderer do battle?"

"No, my noble friend," replied Dacre, "he is coward too, as well as scoundrel. There is his craven answer: you may read it aloud. The matter is now over, and that hope is gone."

"You should not have done this, Harry, without consulting me," said Sir Philip; "I

have some experience in such things. At the very last that was fought between any two gentlemen of rank and station, I was judge of the field, and know right well, what appertains to knightly combat."

"Of that I was full sure," answered Dacre, pressing his hand; "and to you I should have applied for counsel and aid, as soon as I had brought him to the point: but I thought it best to be silent till that was done. I was vain, perhaps, Sir Philip, to think that these dear ladies might take some interest in such a matter—might feel anxious even for me; and though I knew that they would have seen me go forth, with satisfaction, in defence of my honour, and would have bade God speed me on my course, yet it was needless to speak of what was to come, till it did come—and you will see, that it is to be never."

"Read it, Hal, read it," said the knight, "my eyes are old."

Sir Henry Dacre read the letter, the contents of which we have already seen, and Sir Philip Beauchamp and Mary Markham

commented freely thereon, marking well its baseness and its craft ; but Isabel remained silent ; and, looking down at her embroidery, her bright eyes let fall a tear. Many emotions mingled to produce that drop ; she felt to her heart's core how bitter it must be to live with such a doubt hanging over us for ever, like a dark cloud : and the repeated mention of Catherine's name, called back to her mind, in all its freshness, the memory of her cousin's sad fate ; and she was led on to think, too, how happy the wayward girl might have been, if she had but known the advantages which heaven had granted her.

Dacre saw the tear, and marked the silence, and read neither quite aright ; for, with a wounded spot in the heart, the lightest touch will give torture. He sat down with the rest, however ; he strove to cast off some of his gloom ; he told of his journey with Richard of Woodville ; and informed the old knight that his late guest, Hal of Hadnock, was now King of England ; but, while Sir Philip laughed heartily, and called his sovereign “ a mad-head-

ed boy," his young friend relapsed into deep meditation, and the black thought that he must be for ever a doubted and suspected man, again took possession of his mind.

The next morning, when he rose, he was more cheerful. Sleep, which had visited his eyelids only by short glimpses for the last week, had, this night, stayed with him undisturbed: and, what seemed to him more extraordinary still, sweet dreams had come with slumber, giving him back the happiness of former days. He had seemed a boy again, and had wandered with Isabel Beauchamp through the woods and fields around; had heard the birds sing on the spray, and watched the fish darting through the stream. Summer and sunshine had been round their path, and that misty splendour, which only is seen in the visions of the night, as if poured forth from some secret source in the heart of man when the pressure of all external things is taken away—a slight indication, perhaps, of the adaptation of his spirit to the enjoyments of a brighter world than this. He slept longer than usual; and, when

he rose, he found the old Knight and his daughter in the hall.

“I am going down, Harry,” said Sir Philip, “to settle a difference between some of the monks and Roger Dayley of Little Ann about his field. I shall find you when I come back.”

“Nay, I will go with you, noble friend,” answered Dacre, “I wish to see my good Lord Abbot.”

“That you cannot do, unless you ride to London,” replied the old Knight; “he went yesterday morning early to attend the King’s coronation. Stay with Isabel and Mary. I will be back soon.”

It was too tempting a proposal to be refused; and while Sir Philip, with a page carrying his heavy sword, walked down to the Abbey, Dacre remained with Isabel alone in the hall. They watched her father from the door till he entered the wood, and then turning, walked up and down the rush-covered pavement for several minutes without speaking. Dacre’s heart was full of anxious thoughts; and though he much wished to fathom the

feelings of Isabel's heart, and discover some ground for future hope, yet he dreaded to find all his fears verified ; and the words trembled at the gate of speech without obtaining utterance. Isabel, however, was more confident in herself and less conscious of her own sensations ; she saw and grieved at the state of Dacre's mind, and longed to give him comfort and consolation as in days of yore. Finding, then, that he did not begin upon the subject of his cares and sorrows, she resolved to do so herself ; and after a pause, during which she felt agitated, and hesitated she knew not why, she said, " I am glad to speak with you alone, Harry ; for I see you are very, very sad, and I would fain persuade you to take comfort."

" Oh, many things make me thus sad, dear Isabel," replied the Knight with a faint smile ; " but I will try to do better with time."

" Nay, Harry," she answered, " you cannot conceal the cause of your sadness from me. I have known you from my childhood, too well not to understand it all. You were ever jealous too much of your fame ; and now I know,

because this false, bad man has insinuated things that never entered your thoughts, you fancy people will suspect you."

"And will they not, Isabel?" asked Dacre, "I should not say, perhaps, *suspect* me; for suspicion is a more fixed and tangible thing than that which I fear; but will there not be doubts, coming in men's mind against their will, and against their reason? Will they not from time to time, when they think of Henry Dacre, and this sad history, and these dark scandals—will they not ask themselves, What if it were really so?"

"Oh, no, no, Harry," replied his fair companion warmly, "none will think so who know you—none will think so at all, but the base and bad, who are capable of such acts themselves."

"Indeed, Isabel?" said Dacre; "and is such really your belief? You know not how suspicion clings, dear lady. If you stain a silken garment, can you ever make it clear and glossy, as once it was? and the fame of man or woman is of a still finer and frailer texture. There, one spot, one touch, lasts for ever."

With kind and tender words, and every argument that her own small experience could afford, Isabel Beauchamp tried to reassure him; and she succeeded at least in one thing—in convincing him so far of her full confidence in his honour, that he was on the eve of putting it to the strongest test. The acknowledgment of his love hung upon his lips, and, if then spoken, might perchance, in her eagerness to prove her conviction of his innocence, have been met with that warm return, which would have brought the best balm to his heart, although the first effect upon her might have been agitation and alarm. But ere he could utter the words on which his fate depended, Mary Markham joined them, and he waited for another opportunity. Dacre returned to his own house at night; but every-day he went over to the hall, his mood varying like a changeful morning, sometimes sunny with hope and temporary forgetfulness, sometimes all cloud and gloom, when memory recalled the suspicions that had been pointed at him. Those suspicions, too, were frequently recalled to his mind even by his

own acts, for he eagerly strove to discover by whose instrumentality his whole course, on the unfortunate night of poor Catherine Beauchamp's death, had been conveyed to Sir Simeon of Roydon. But by so doing, he only fretted his own spirit and gained no information: whoever was the spy, he remained concealed.

Three or four days were thus passed before he obtained any second opportunity of speaking with Isabel alone; but, on his arrival at the dwelling of Sir Philip Beauchamp on the morning of the 9th of April, he was told by a servant whom he found in the hall, that the family had gone forth into the park; and following immediately, he found Isabel sitting under the trees, without companions. She seemed to have been weeping, and it was a pleasant task for Dacre to strive to console her who had so often been his own comforter.

“There are tears in your eyes, dear Isabel,” he said, as she rose gracefully to meet him. “What has grieved you?”

“Have you not seen my father?” asked

the lady. “Do you not know that our dear Mary is going to leave us? She goes to London to-day, and he goes with her so far.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the knight; “that is very sudden.”

“And very sad,” answered Isabel; “the hall will be melancholy enough without her now,—I cannot but weep, and shall never cease to regret her going.”

“Nay, nay, time will bring balm, dear Isabel,” answered Dacre. “You have often told me so.”

“And have you believed me, Harry?” answered the lady, with a faint and almost reproachful smile; “even last night, you were more sad and grave than ever.”

“Ay, but this is a different case,” replied Dacre; “one can lose a friend—ay, even by death; one can lose anything more easily than honour and renown.”

“But the loss of yours is only in your own fancy, Dacre,” she answered. “Who believes this charge, that Simeon of Roydon dares to hint, but not to avow? Whom has it affected?

In whom do you see a change? Surely not in my father; surely not in me."

"No, assuredly, Isabel," he said, after thinking for a while; "but as yet I have had no occasion to make the trial. Hearken, and I will put a case. Suppose, dear Isabel, that I were to love; suppose the lady that I loved had heard this tale; suppose that she had loved me well before, and at her knee I were now to crave the blessing of her hand; would not a doubt, would not a hesitation cross her mind? Would she not ask herself—"

"Oh no!" cried Isabel; but Dacre went on, not suffering her to conclude.

"You put it not fully to your own heart, dear Isabel," he said. "Suppose you were that lady, suppose that all Harry Dacre's hopes and happiness for life were staked on your reply; suppose that to you, who have so often consoled him in affliction, calmed him in anger, soothed him in anxiety, he were to say, 'Isabel will you be my comforter through life, the star of my existence, the recompence for all I have suffered?' would not one thought—"

Isabel trembled violently, and her cheek turned ashy pale.

“It is enough,” said Dacre, with a quivering lip; “I am answered! That memory could never be banished from your heart.—It is enough!”

“Oh no, no!” cried Isabel; but, as will almost always happen when a word may make all clear, an interruption came; before she could go on, good old Sir Philip Beauchamp was seen upon the steps of the house, waving them to come back with a loud “Halloo!”

They both turned and walked towards the hall in silence. Isabel would fain have spoken, but agitation overpowered her. She wished that Dacre, by a single word, would give her an opportunity of reply; but his over sensitive heart was convinced of her feelings, reading them all wrong; and he would not force her to speak what he thought must be painful for her to utter, and for him to hear. Twice she made up her mind to explain, but twice her heart failed her at the moment of execution; and it was not till they were within a few steps

of the place where her father stood, that she could say, in a low voice, “ You are mistaken, Harry, indeed you are mistaken ! ”

He shook his head with a bitter smile, and walked on in silence.

CHAPTER X.

THE MINSTREL'S GIRL.

AT the hour appointed by the King, Richard of Woodville arrived at the palace, and was at once introduced to Henry's presence. The monarch was now quite alone, and seemed in a more cheerful, a less meditative mood than the day before. "Well, Richard," he said, "how sped you last night? you found room in hall, and a place at board, I trust?"

"I did, Sire," replied Woodville; "and so long as I was here 'twas well; but as I returned homeward to my hostel, I saw that done which grieved me, and would grieve your Highness too, were it told."

"Speak it, speak it," said the King. "I am now in that station where every day I must hear that which offends my ear, if I

would perform the first duty of a King and render justice to my people. What is this you saw?"

Briefly and accurately Richard of Woodville, as he had previously determined, related to the monarch the facts attending the death of the old minstrel, by the brutal act of Sir Simeon of Roydon, and his companions; and he could see Henry's brow gather into a heavy frown, and his cheek flush. When he had done, the King rose from his chair, before he spoke, and walked twice across the small chamber in which the young gentleman had found him.

"This is bad," he said at length; "this is bad; but I must not interfere with the course of law. The matter will be inquired into of course. If the law should not punish the offence, I might myself inflict some chastisement, and, by banishing this man from my court and presence, mark my indignation at his rash contempt of human life and suffering, to call it nothing worse. But I have other views, Richard; and if I must strike, I would have it effectually."

"I do not understand *you*, Sire," replied Woodville, seeing that the King paused.

"No, perhaps not," said Henry; and then falling into a fit of musing again, he remained for more than a minute with his eyes fixed upon the ground. "Call me a page," he continued, at length; "I will see this Sir Simeon of Roydon."

Richard of Woodville obeyed, and when the boy appeared, Henry directed him in the clear brief words, with which even trivial orders are given by men of powerful and accurate minds, to inquire of the sergeant of the gates where Sir Simeon of Roydon was to be found, and then to summon him immediately to his presence.

"He shall make some compensation to the old man's daughter, or whoever she is, whatever the law may say," the King continued, turning to his companion, after having spoken to the page: "but tell me, Richard, was this the only adventure you met with yesterday? Ned Dyrham told me, that some one had spoken to you by name in the crowd, bidding you

not to let poor Dacre do battle with Simeon of Roydon,—she anticipated my commands it would seem.”

“ She did so truly, Sire,” replied Woodville ; “ but I could never discover who it was, though she again spoke to me at the gates of the convent as I came out.”

“ It is very strange,” said the King ; “ did you not know the voice ?”

“ It seemed somewhat disguised,” answered the young gentleman ; “ but still it was clearly a woman’s voice, and there were tones in it not unfamiliar to my ear, yet not sufficiently strong on recollection to enable me in any way to judge who spoke.”

“ Have we got fairies amongst us even in Westminster ?” asked the monarch laughing. “ Well, my good friend, you have nothing to do but obey your fair monitor.”

“ In that I shall not fail, Sire,” replied Richard ; “ for I shall have no cause to prevent or encourage Dacre—Simeon of Roydon will take good heed to that. But I trust neither the lady nor your Highness will forbid my

chastising this man myself, if need should be ; for as I have told you, Sire, I cast him from his horse last night, before his comrades ; and he will seek revenge in some shape, I am sure."

" To defend himself is every man's right," replied the King ; " but I must insist, that no arranged encounter takes place between you and Sir Simeon of Roydon, without your sovereign's consent." The King spoke sternly, almost harshly ; but he added a moment after, in a mild and familiar tone, " The truth is, Richard, that I have resolved, as much as possible to put a stop, both to the trial by battle and combats at outrance between my subjects. The blood of Englishmen is too precious to their King and their country to be shed so frequently as it has hitherto been in private quarrels. The evil is increasing, and if it be not stayed, a time will come when every idle jest will be the subject of a combat, and the man of mere brute courage will venture upon any wrong he chooses to do another, because he values his life less than his neighbour. Such a state shall never grow up under me. The day may not be far

distant when, in defence of the rights of this crown, I shall give every English gentleman an opportunity of displaying his valour and his skill; but, till then, I will hold a strong hand over quarrelsome folks. As a last resource for honour really wounded, or, under the sanction of the law, for the judgment of God in dark cases which human wisdom cannot decide, I may consent that an appeal be made to the lance; but not till every other means has been tried. Such is my resolution; let that suffice you; I know you will obey; and in the court of Burgundy, if I hear right you will have plenty of occasions, should you be too full of blood, to shed it freely. I have wished to give you some gift, my friend," he continued in a tone of kindly condescension; "but for the present, I can think of nothing better than this."

He took a ring from his finger and held it out to the young gentleman who stood beside him, adding, "Take it, Richard; wear it always; and when you look upon it, think of Hal of Hadnock. But should you at any time

seek aught of the King of England, seal your letter with that ring, and I will open and read the contents myself, and immediately. It shall go hard, but I will grant you your boon, if it be such as the Richard of Woodville whom I know, is likely to request. So, farewell, and God speed you, and lead you to honour."

Richard of Woodville knelt and kissed the gracious Prince's hand ; and then, retiring from his presence, sped back to his inn without adventure.

All traces of the last day's festival had disappeared ; the citizens had resumed their usual occupations ; the artizan had gone to his work, the merchant to his warehouse, the tradesman to his stall, the monk to his cloister, the priest to his chapel or his church. The streets, though there was many a passenger hurrying to and fro, seemed almost empty, by comparison ; and a scene that was in itself gay, looked dull from the want of all the glitter and pageantry of the preceding afternoon.

The inn, called the Acorn, at which Richard of Woodville had taken up his abode, was a

low building in what we still term the Strand, between the cross at Charing and a very small monastery which was soon after attached to the abbey of Roncesvalles in Navarre, and acquired the name of Roncêvaux. The entrance to the Acorn was a tall dark arch, and as soon as Richard of Woodville rode in, followed by his two attendants, for Ned Dyram he had not seen since the day before, the host presented himself, saying with a low reverence and a smile, “There has been a fair maid seeking you, noble sir. There have been tears in her eyes too, full lately ; I hope you are not a faithless Squire to make the pretty maiden weep.”

“Poor thing, she has good cause,” answered Woodville gravely. “She is the poor old man’s daughter, I suppose, who was killed by the horses last night. When did she say she would return ?”

“She is here now, she is here now,” cried the host’s wife from within. “How can you be such a fool, Jenkyn ? I took her in till the noble gentleman returned. I knew she was

no light o' love, but only came from foreign lands."

"I never said she was, good wife," replied her husband. "Shall I bring her up, sir, to your chamber?"

"No," answered Richard, "it wants an hour of dinner yet; let her come with me to the hall if it be vacant."

"That it is, discreet sir," replied the host, "now I warrant you," he continued murmuring to himself as he walked away to call the poor girl to her kind benefactor; "he has got some lady love himself, and fears it should come to her ears, were he to entertain a pretty maiden in his own chamber."

Perhaps some such thought might pass through Richard of Woodville's mind; but certainly it would never have entered therein, had it not been for the host's first suspicion; and he would have received the poor girl in his own room without hesitation, though the minstrels of that day and their followers, were generally a somewhat dissolute and licentious race. It has happened strangely, indeed, in all ages,

that those who follow as their profession, the sweetest of arts, music, which would seem intended to elevate and purify the mind and heart, should be so frequently obnoxious to the charge of immoral life ; but so it has been, alas, though difficult to account for.

Finding his way through one or two long ill-lighted passages, Richard of Woodville opened the door of the room appropriated to the daily meals of the guests and their host, and had not long to wait for the object of his compassion. She was not dressed in the same manner as the night before ; but still, her garb was singular. A bright red scarf, which had been twined through her black hair, was no longer there ; and the rich, luxuriant tresses were bound plainly round her head, which was partially covered also by a hood of simple gray cloth. The rest of her apparel was white, except at the edge of the petticoat, which came not much below the knee, and was bordered by two bands of gold lace. Her small, delicate ankles, as fair as alabaster, were, nevertheless, without covering ; and her feet were clothed in

small slippers of untanned leather, trimmed and tied with gold.

Bending down her beautiful head as she entered, she said, "I have come to thank you, noble sir."

"Nay, no thanks, my fair maiden," answered Woodville, placing a stool for her to sit, as the host retired. "I did but what any Christian and gentleman ought to do; so, say not a word of that. But I am glad you have come, for I wish much to hear more of you, and to know what will become of you now."

"Ah! what, indeed?" said the girl, casting down her eyes, which had before been fixed upon the young gentleman's countenance.

"Have you no friends, no home, to which you can go?" asked Woodville.

"In this country, no friends that would receive me, no home that would be open to me," replied the girl, the tears rolling over the long black lashes, and trickling down her cheek. "I am not given to yield to sorrow thus," she added; "had I been, it would have crushed me long ago. But this last

blow has been heavy ; and, like a reed beaten down by the storm, I shall not raise my head, till the sun shines again."

" But you are of English birth ?" enquired Richard of Woodville ; " if not, you speak our tongue rarely."

" Oh, yes ! I am English," she cried eagerly, " English in heart, and spirit, and birth ; but yet, my mother was from a distant land."

" And was that poor old man your father ?" demanded her companion ; " come, let me hear something of your former life, that I may think what can be done for the future."

The girl evidently hesitated ; she coloured, and then turned pale ; and Richard of Woodville began to fear that, in the interest he had taken in her, he had been made the fool of imagination. " She is probably like the rest," he thought ; " and yet, her very shame to speak it, shows, that she has some good feelings left."

But, while he was still pondering, the girl exclaimed, clasping her hands, " Oh, yes ! I am sure I may tell you. You are not one

who—whatever might be his errors—would deprive a poor old man of blessed ground to rest in, or the prayers of good men for his soul."

"Not I, indeed," replied the young gentleman; "methinks, we have no right to carry justice or punishment beyond the grave. When the spirit is called to its Creator, let him be judge—not man. But, speak: I do not understand you clearly."

"I will make my tale short," she answered. "That old man was my father's father; a minstrel once in the house of the great Earl of Northumberland—I can just remember the Earl—and a gay and happy household it was. He was well paid and lodged, much loved by the good Lord, and wealthy by his bounty. My father was stout and tall, a brave man, and skilful in arms; and he was the Percy's henchman. Once, when one of the Earl's kinsmen went to the court of the Emperor, my father was sent with him, I have heard; and he returned with my mother, a native of a town called Innsbruck in the mountains. I know

not whether you have heard of it ; but it is a fair city, in good truth."

" You have seen it, then ?" asked Richard of Woodville.

" Not a year since," answered the girl ; " but, to my tale. When I was still young, my father fought and fell with Hotspur ; and, not long after, the Duke's household was dispersed, and he himself obliged to fly to Wales, or Scotland, I know not which. My mother pined and died, for the people there loved not a stranger amongst them ; and, after my father's death, called her nought but *the foreigner*. They laughed, too, at her language, for she could speak but poor English ; and, what between their gibes and her own grief, she withered away daily, till her eyes closed. She taught me her own language, however ; and I have not forgot it.—She taught me her own faith, too ; and I have not abandoned it."

" And that was—" exclaimed Richard.

" The holy Catholic faith !" replied the girl, crossing herself ; " and nothing has ever been able to turn me from it. But still, I could

not let it break all bonds—could I, noble sir?"

"Perhaps not," replied Richard of Woodville; "but let me hear farther."

"When the Earl fled, and my mother died," continued the girl, "my grandfather took me with him to the town of York; and, as he was wealthy, as I have said, his kinsfolk, who were many in the place, were glad to see him. He was very kind to me—oh, how kind! and taught me to sing, and play on many instruments. But there came a disciple of Wicliffe into the town, where there were already many Lollards in secret; and the poor old man listened to them, and became one of them. I would not hear them; for I ever thought of my mother, and what she had taught me; and this caused the first unkind words my grandfather ever gave me. He mourned for them afterwards, when he found I was not undutiful, as he had called me. But, in the mean time, he went on with the Lollards; till, one night, as they were coming from a place where they had met, a crowd of rabble and loose people

set upon them with sticks and stones, and beat them terribly ; and the poor old man was brought home, with his face and eyes sadly cut. Some of the Lollards were taken, and two were tried, and burnt as heretics. But my grandfather escaped that fate ; for, by this time, his eyes had become red and fiery, and he kept close to his own house. The redness at length went away — but light went too ; and he was in daily fear of persecution. One night, when he was very sad, I asked him why he stayed in York, where there were so many perils ; but he shook his head, and answered, ‘ Because I am sightless, my child ; and I have none to guide me.’ Then I asked him again, if he had not me ; and if he thought I would not go with him to the world’s end : and I found, by what he said, that he had long thought of going to foreign lands, but did not speak of it, because he thought that, as I would not hear his people, I would refuse to go. When he found I was ready, however, his mind was soon made up, and we went first to a town called

Liege, where he had a brother, and there we lived happily enough for some time ; for that brother, and all his family, thought on many matters with him. But he heard of a man named Huss, who is a great leader of that sect in a country called Bohemia, and he resolved to go thither, as he was threatened with persecution in Liege. We then wandered far and wide through strange lands.—But why should I make my tale long ? We suffered many things—were plundered, wronged, persecuted, beaten ; and the money that he had, began to melt away, with no resource behind ; for we had heard that our own relations and friends in York had pillaged his house ; and one had taken possession of it as his own. I then proposed to him that I should sing at festivals and tournaments, that he might keep the little he still had against an evil day. Thus we came through Germany, and Burgundy, and part of France and Brabant ; and, at length, he determined that he would come back to his own country, which he did, only to be murdered last night, for we have not been a month in England.”

“Alas! my poor girl,” said Richard of Woodville, “yours is, indeed, a sad history; and, in truth, I know not what counsel to give you for the future. Alone, as you are, in the world, you need some one much to protect you.”

“I do indeed,” replied the girl, “but I have none; and yet,” she added, after a moment, “these are foolish thoughts, brought upon me but by grief. I can protect myself. Many have a worse fate than I have; for how often are those who have been softly nurtured, cast suddenly into misfortune and distress! I have been inured to it by degrees—taught step by step to struggle and resist. Mine is not a heart to yield to evil chances. The little that I want in life, I trust, I can honestly obtain; and, if not honestly, why, I can die. There is still a home for the wanderer,—there is still a place of repose for the weary.” But, as she spoke, the tears that rolled over her cheeks, belied the fortitude which she assumed.

Richard of Woodville paused and meditated, ere he replied. “Stay,” he said at length,

as the girl rose, and covered her head again with her hood, which she had cast back, as if she were about to depart. “Stay! a thought has struck me. Perchance, I can call the King’s bounty to you. I myself am now about to depart for distant lands. I am going to the court of Burgundy in a few days, and shall not see our sovereign again before I set out; but I have a servant, who was once the King’s, and he will have the means of telling your sad tale.”

“To the Court of Burgundy!” exclaimed the girl eagerly; “oh! that I were going thither with you!”

“That may hardly be,” replied Woodville with a smile, as she gazed, with her large dark eyes upon his face.

“I know it;” she answered sighing, and cast her eyes down to the ground again with the blood mounting into her cheek, “yet why not in the same ship?—I have kinsfolk both in Liege and in Peronne—you would not see wrong done to me?”

“Assuredly not,” said the young gentleman;

“but if the King can be engaged to show you kindness, it will be better. What little I can spare, my poor girl, shall be yours ; and I will send this man of whom I spoke, to see you and tell you more. First, however, you must let me know where you are lodged, and for whom he must ask, as it may be three or four days before he returns from the errand, he is now gone to perform.”

“ My name is Ella Brune,” replied the girl ; and she went on to describe to Richard of Woodville the situation of the house in which she and her grandfather had taken up their abode, on their arrival in London a few days before. He found from her account that it was a small hostel just within the walls of the city, which the old man had known and frequented in former years ; that the host and his good dame were kind and homely people ; and that though the poor girl had remained out watching the corpse at the lodge of the convent, she had returned that morning to explain the cause of her absence, and had been received with sympathy and consolation. Knowing well,

however, that there is a limit to the tenderness of most innkeepers, and that that limit is seldom, if ever, extended beyond the length of their guest's purse, the young gentleman took three half nobles, which, to say truth, was as much as he could spare, and offered them to his fair companion, saying, "Trouble yourself not in regard to expenses of the funeral, Ella, or of the masses. The porter of the convent has been here this morning before I went out, and I have arranged all that with him."

The girl looked at the money in his hand, with a tearful eye and a burning cheek ; but, after gazing for a moment, she put his hand gently away, saying, "No, no, I cannot take it—from you I cannot take it."

"And why not from me ?" asked Richard of Woodville in some surprise.

She hesitated for an instant and then replied, "Because you have been so good and kind already. Were it from a stranger, I might—but you have already given me much, paid much ; and you shall not hurt yourself for me. I have enough."

“ Nay, nay, Ella,” said Richard with a smile. “ If I have been kind, that is a reason why you must not grieve me by refusing the little I can give; and as to what I have paid, I will say to you with Little John whom you have heard of

“ I have done thee a good turn for an
Quit me when thou may.”

“ And what did Robin answer?” said the girl, a light coming up into her eyes as she forgot, for an instant, her loss and her desolate situation in the struggle of generosity, which she kept up against her young benefactor—

“ Nay, by my troth, said Robin,
So shall it never be.”

“ It must be, if you would not pain me,” replied Richard of Woodville; “ you must not be left in this wide place, my poor girl, without friend or money.”

“ Nay, but I have enough;” she answered; “ if I were tempted to take it, 'twould only be with the thought of crossing the sea, which costs much money, I know.”

“Then take it for that chance, my poor Ella,” replied Woodville forcing the money into her hand; “and tell me what store you have got, in order that, if I have ought more to spare, when I have received what my copse-wood brings, I may send it to you by the servant I spoke of.”

“Indeed, I know not,” said Ella Brune; “there is a small leathern bag at the inn, in which we used to put all that we gathered; but I thought not to look what it contained. My heart was too heavy when I went back, to reckon money. But there is enough to pay all that we owe, I know; and as for the time to come,” she added with a melancholy smile, “I eat little, and drink less; so that my diet is soon paid.”

Her words and manner had that harmony in them, which can rarely be attained when both do not spring from the heart; and Richard of Woodville became more and more interested in the fair object of his kindness every moment. He detained her some time longer to ask farther questions; but, at length the host opened

the door, and told him, there was a young man without who sought to speak with him. This interruption terminated his conversation with Ella Brune ; for, drawing her hood farther still over her face, she again rose, took his hand and pressed her lips upon it.

“The blessing of the queen of heaven be upon you, noble sir,” she said ; and then passed through the door, at which the landlord still stood, wondering a little at the deep gratitude which she seemed to feel towards his young guest.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DECEIVER.

THE King of England remained seated for many minutes exactly where Richard of Woodville had left him. His right hand rested on the arm of his chair; his left upon the hilt of his dagger; and his eyes remained fixed apparently upon the heavy building of the Abbey, such as it then appeared, before a far successor of his added to it a structure, rich, and perhaps beautiful in itself, but sadly out of keeping with the rest of the pile. But Henry saw not the long straight lines of the solemn mass of masonry; he heard not the bells chiming from the belfry hard by: his mind was absent from the scene in which his body dwelt; and his thoughts busy with things very different from those that surrounded him.

On what did they rest? Over what did the

spirit of the great English monarch ponder, the very day after he had solemnly assumed the crown and sceptre?—Who can say?

He might perhaps remember other days with some regret; for we can never lose ought that we have possessed without some mournful feelings of deprivation returning upon us from time to time, however great and overpowering be the compensation that we obtain; we can never change from one state and station in our mortal course to another without sometimes thinking of former joys, and gone-by happiness, even though we have acquired grander blessings, and a more expansive sphere: and oh! how great is the change, even from the position of a prince, to that of a monarch! so great indeed, that none who have not known it can even divine.

He might already, perhaps, feel what a burden a crown may sometimes become; how heavy are occasionally the gorgeous robes of state; he might look back to the free buoyancy of his early life, and long to roam the wide plains and fields of his kingdom alone, and at his

ease. Or he might think of friendship—and there was none more capable of knowing and valuing it aright—and might wonder whether a monarch could indeed have a friend; one into whose bosom he could pour his secret thoughts, or with whose wit he could try his own, in free, but not undignified encounter; one in whom he could trust, and with whom he might relax, certain that the condescension of the sovereign would not be mistaken, nor the confidence of the friend betrayed.

Again, he might ponder upon all the difficulties and pains of a royal station: he might think, “Each of my subjects is burdened with his own cares and anxieties, but I with the care and anxiety of the whole:” or his mind might turn to the especial troubles and discomforts of a monarch, and remember how many he must have to disappoint; how often he must have to punish; how much he must have to refuse; how seldom he might be permitted to forgive; what great works he must necessarily leave undone; what good deeds he might be obliged to neglect; what faults he must

be called upon to overlook ; what pain and grief, even to the good and wise, a stern necessity might compel him to inflict.

He might perhaps think of any, or all of these things, for they were all within the grasp of his character, as Henry was peculiarly a thoughtful monarch. We are indeed only accustomed to look upon him, either as a wild youth, suddenly and somewhat strangely reformed, or as a great conqueror and skilful general, a prudent and ambitious prince. But those who will enquire into his private life, who will mark the recorded words that occasionally broke from his lips, trace the causes and course of his actions, examine his conduct to his friends, and even to his enemies, who will in short strip off the monarch's robes and look upon the man, will find a meditative spirit, though a quick one ; a warm heart though a firm one ; a rich and lively imagination though a clear and vigorous judgment. He was not one to take upon him the cares of government without feeling all their weight ; to regard a throne as a seat of ease and pleasure, or to

assume the grand responsibilities of sovereign power, without examining them stedfastly and sternly, seeing all that is bright, and all that is dark therein, and feeling keenly every sacrifice for which they call.

To love and to be beloved by a whole nation, to give and to receive happiness by a wise government of a great people, is assuredly a mighty recompence for all the pains of royal station ; but yet those pains will be felt hourly while the reward is afar ; and the monarch's conversation with Richard of Woodville, had awakened him to some of those evils which the wisest rule cannot entirely remedy. Almost under the windows of his palace, on the very day of his coronation, in the midst of rejoicing and festivity, one of his subjects, an innocent inoffensive old man, had been brutally deprived of life, by a party of those who had been feasting at his own table ; and, when he remembered all the scenes with which the course of his early life had made him acquainted throughout this wide land, he saw what a task it would be to restrain the wild

licence of a host of turbulent nobles, and to bind them to submission to the laws, and to reverence for the rights and happiness of others.

The monarch was still deep in thought when the page, whom he had sent for Sir Simeon of Roydon, returned, announcing that he was in waiting without; and Henry at once ordered him to be admitted. The knight advanced with courtly bows, and more than due reverence, for he was one of those who, overbearing and haughty to their inferiors, are always cringing and fawning towards those above them, at least until they are detected.

But Henry came to the point at once, saying, with a stern brow, “I hear matters regarding you, Sir Simeon of Roydon, that please me not; and I would fain hear from your own lips, what explanation you can give. Know, sir, that the subjects of this crown are not to be murdered with impunity, and that sooner or later blood will find a tongue to accuse those that spill it.”

The knight turned somewhat pale under the keen eye of the King; but he answered at

once in smooth and fluent tones, “ I was not aware, Sire, that I had done ought that should bring upon me the greatest punishment that I could receive—that of falling under the displeasure of your Highness ; for any other infliction which might follow that severe misfortune, would seem nothing in comparison, or light indeed, if by any bodily suffering I could remove the heavy weight of your anger. May I humbly enquire what is my fault ? It must be great, I am sure, though I know it not, to make so clement a King regard his servant so harshly.”

“ It is great, sir,” replied Henry, who could not be deluded with fair words ; “ did you not, last night, after quitting the hall below, cause the death of an old man by a most brutal outrage ? ”

“ Nay, Heaven forbid ! ” cried Roydon, with well-feigned surprise and grief. “ Your Highness does not, I trust, mean to say that the poor old man is dead ? ”

“ He was killed upon the spot, sir,” answered Henry ; “ and I am told, you did not even

stop to enquire what had been the result of your own act."

"I will go home and have him slaughtered without delay," exclaimed Roydon, as if speaking to himself in a paroxysm of regret.

"Have whom slaughtered?" asked the King, gazing upon him coldly: for he began to divine the course his defence was to take.

"The brute that did it, Sire," replied the knight; "three times has that horse nearly deprived me of life, which I heeded not much, for it is a fine though unruly animal; but now that he has taken the life of another, his own shall be forfeit. Scarcely had I mounted when, with the bit between his teeth, he set off at full speed; some of my companions galloped after to stop him if possible; but were unable, till a gentleman on foot, I know not who, caught the bridle in the crowd; and I, not seeing what had befallen, rode on keeping him in with difficulty."

A slight smile curled the lip of the King, showing to Sir Simeon Roydon that he was not fully believed, and a dark feeling of

anger — the rage of detected meanness — gathered itself in the inmost recesses of his heart, with only the more bitter intensity because he dared not suffer it to peep forth. There is nothing that we hate so much as one whom, however much he may offend us, we cannot injure. Vengeance is the drink by which the dire thirst of hate is often assuaged ; but if that cannot by any possibility be obtained, the burning of the heart goes on increasing till it becomes the unquenchable drought of fever.

The monarch answered calmly, however, and without further reproach. “Your tale, Sir Simeon,” he said, “is somewhat different from that which previously reached my ears. I trust it can be substantiated in all its parts ; for this matter must be investigated fully. The crown officer will of course do his duty by inquest upon the body. It will be well for you to be present ; and the law will then take its due effect. Retire for a time, sir, into another chamber, and I will cause enquiry to be made, as to when a jury will be ready to investigate the case.”

Sir Simeon of Roydon bowed with a sad and respectful countenance, and turned towards the door; but when he reached it, the expression of his face, now averted from the King, was very different from that which it had been a moment before. A mocking smile sat upon his lip—the sneering, bitter expression of a bad spirit which has gained some advantage over a nobler one; but it was gone again the moment he opened the door and stood in presence of two or three attendants, who were waiting in the ante-room. At the same instant the voice of Henry called the page, and Sir Simeon pausing and seating himself, could hear the King give orders for making the enquiries which he had mentioned. In less than twenty minutes, the page returned and entered the monarch's closet, after which the Knight was recalled.

“I find, sir,” said Henry when he appeared again before him, “that uncommonly quick proceedings have been taken in this case. The inquest has sat already, and the good men have pronounced the death accidental. So far the find-

ing is satisfactory ; but as it is clear that the accident occurred by your furious riding of a horse which you yourself acknowledge to be vicious and dangerous, I have to require that you make the only compensation that can be made to the person who I am told is this old man's grandchild. You will, therefore, go at once to the hospital of St. James, and there, or elsewhere when you have found her, will pay to this poor girl the sum of fifty half nobles, expressing your sorrow—which, doubtless, you feel sincerely—for the evil you have occasioned."

Sir Simeon of Roydon bowed with every appearance of respect ; but there was a scowl upon his brow ; and he could not refrain from asking, " May I enquire, Sire, whether this fine is imposed by the inquest, or whether it be the award of your Highness ; for if—"

Henry's cheek flushed, and the impetuous spirit which had made him in early years strike the judge upon the bench, roused itself for a moment in his heart. It was conquered speedily, however, and he murmured to himself, " No, I will not act the tyrant." " Sir Simeon," he

continued aloud, waving his hand, “ the award is mine, as you say. It is my desire that this should be done. You will do it or not as you think fit, for I will not strain the laws ; but if it be not done, never present yourself before me again. That at the least I may require, sir, though the verdict of the jury can but affect the horse you rode.”

“ Your Highness did not hear me out,” replied Roydon, who had now recovered the mastery of himself ; “ I did but presume to ask, because if such a fine had been imposed by the jury, I should have resisted it as contrary to law ; but at the command of your Highness, I pay it, not only with submission but with pleasure, as the only means I have of showing both my regret at what has taken place, and my eager desire to conform myself in all things to your will. Not an hour shall pass before you are certified that I have not only obeyed, but gone beyond your orders ; and so I humbly take my leave.”

The words were well and gracefully spoken, and Henry found no occasion to complain of

the knight's demeanour ; but still he was not satisfied that his obedience was the submission of the heart, for he knew right well that fair words, ay, and fair actions too, are often but the cloaks of sly and subtle knavery ; and the character of Sir Simeon of Roydon was not new to him. He replied merely, “ So you shall do well, sir ;” and bowed his head as a signal that he might depart.

The knight quitted his presence in no happy mood, perceiving right well that the monarch's favour on which he had counted much, had been lost and not regained. He hated him for the clear-sighted penetration which had seen through his art ; and he only doubted whether there was or was not a chance of still deceiving his sovereign, and recovering his good graces, by an appearance of zeal and devotion in obeying his commands.

“ It is worth the trial,” he thought, “ and it shall be tried ; but I shall soon find whether he continues to nourish such ill will towards me, and if he do, my course must be shaped accordingly. Curses upon these beggarly vagrants !

Who ever heard of King before who troubled his nobility about minstrels and tomblesteres? This smacks of the early tastes of our magnanimous monarch, whose sole delight within these two months, was in pot-house tipplers, and losel gamesters. He may assume a royal port and solemn manner, if he will; but the habit of years is not so easily conquered, and, if he trip now, he is lost. Men were tired enough of his usurping father. A new prince carries the ever changing multitude at his heels; but time will bring weariness, and weariness is soon changed into disgust.—We shall see, we shall see; and the day of vengeance may come. In the mean-time, of one, at least, I have had retribution; and this other shall not long escape—a rude, ballad singing peasant, only fit for the brute sports of the bull-baiting, or the fair—a very franklin in spirit, and a yeoman in heart."

With thoughts,—which, as the reader may have perceived, had deviated from the King to Richard of Woodville,—with thoughts wavering with a strong inclination to bold evil, but chained down to mere knavery, for the time,

by some remaining chances of success—for, strange as it may seem, as many men are rendered cowards by hope as by fear—Sir Simeon of Roydon pursued his way to the hospital of St. James, on foot, having hastened to the presence of the King without waiting for his horses. As, still in deep and angry thought, he approached the gate and the old lodge, he raised his eyes somewhat suddenly at an advancing step, and beheld the form of a young girl with her long dark eyelashes bent down till they rested on her cheek. He caught but a momentary glance as she hurried by; but Simeon of Roydon was quick and eager in his examination of all that is beautiful in mere form, and that glance was sufficient to rouse no very holy feelings. The rounded limbs, the small and delicate foot and ankle, the fine chiseled features, the graceful easy movements, the exquisite neck and bosom half hidden by the folds of the grey hood, were all marked in an instant; and as she seemed alone, without defence or protection, he hesitated, for a moment, whether to stop and speak to her; but

while he paused, she was gone with a quick step ; the gate of the convent was near, and, resisting the passing temptation, he walked on and rang the bell.

The porter slowly opened the gate ; and, with the tone of careless and haughty indifference which has always marked the inferior personages of a court—I mean the inferior in mind, more than the inferior in rank or station—the knight said, “ there was an old man killed near this spot last night, I think.”

“ There was, noble sir,” answered the porter with a low reverence to his air of superiority, “ the body has been moved to the chapel.”

“ I care nought about the body,” rejoined Roydon. “ He had a daughter or grand-daughter or something with him ; where is she ?”

“ She has just gone forth, noble sir,” replied the porter ; “ you must have passed her at the gate.”

“ Ha ! what a girl with a grey hood and a white coat, with some gold at the edge ?” asked the knight.

“ The same, noble sir,” said the old man ; “ poor thing, she is sadly afflicted.”

“Send her to me when she comes back, and I will comfort her,” answered the visitor in a light tone.

“Nay, sir, she is none of those, I’ll warrant,” replied the porter, very little edified; “and I give no such messages here.”

“Thou art a fool, old man,” said Sir Simeon of Roydon. “Will she come back hither?”

“Doubtless, she will,” answered the other, “for better comfort than you can give.”

“Pshaw! art thou a preacher?” demanded the knight with a sneer. “The comfort that I have to give, is gold by the King’s command. So tell her to come to Burwash-house, close by the temple gate, up the lane to the left, and ask for Simeon of Roydon. If I be not within, I will leave the money with a servant; but bid her come quickly, for I must tell the King as soon as his bounty is bestowed — When will she be here?”

“That I know not,” answered the old man; “the prioress bade me give her admission to the parlour whenever she came, for the ladies, the sisters, have taken her case much to heart.

But the young woman did not say when she would return. Perhaps, it would be better for you to leave the money with the lady prioress herself, who would render it to her when she sees her."

" Give advice to those who ask it, my friend," replied Roydon. " I know best what are the King's commands and my duty; so tell her what I say on the part of his Highness, and let her come as speedily as maybe."

The knight then turned, and with a haughty step, took his way back to Burwash-house, the London mansion of a distant kinsman, who, in reverence of his newly acquired wealth, permitted the heir of poor Catherine Beauchamp to inhabit it during his own absence from the capital.

Sir Simeon of Roydon was now enjoying to the full, that which he had long earnestly desired,—the prosperity of riches, which he had never before known; for his own estate had originally been small, and had soon been encumbered under the influence of expensive tastes and vain ostentation. Unchastened by

adversity, unreclaimed by experience, he was now living as much beyond his present, as he had previously lived beyond his former fortune ; and grooms and attendants of all kinds waited him at his dwelling, chosen from the scum of a great city, which always affords a multitude of serviceable knaves, ready to aid an heir to spend his inheritance, and, by obsequious compliance with all rash or vicious desires, to secure themselves a participation in the plunder, during the term of its existence. To some of these worthies, whom he found in the court, he gave orders for the immediate admission of poor Ella Brune as soon as she appeared ; and then, betaking himself to a chamber on the first floor, he occupied himself for somewhat more than an hour in thinking over future plans, no inconsiderable portion of which referred to the gratification of many of the pleasant little passions that, like strong drink, by turns stimulate and allay the thirst of a depraved mind. Revenge—or, rather, the gratification of hate ; for revenge presupposes injury — was predominant, though ambition had a goodly share also.

To become that for which he thought himself well fitted, but towards which he had never hitherto been able to take one step, a great and prominent man, was one principal object: to take a share in the mightier deeds of life, to rule and influence others, to command, to be looked up to, to receive authority, and wield it at will. Oh, how often does that desire *to become a great man* render one a little man!—How often is it the source of littleness in those who might otherwise be great indeed! When the greatest philosopher that modern ages has produced, declared that, “to rise to dignities we must submit to indignities,” how powerful to debase the mightiest mind, did that longing *to become a great man* show itself! How constantly, through his whole career, do we see it producing all that made him other than great! It was, and is ever, the result of the one grand fundamental error, the misappreciation of real greatness. And thus we desire to become great in the eyes of other men, not in our own; to win the applause of worms, not merit the approbation of God.

Such pitiful elevation was the only greatness coveted by him of whom we speak: but that was not the only desire which moved him; he longed for indulgence of every kind, from which straitened circumstances had long debarred him; he thought of pleasures with the eagerness of a Tantalus, who had for years beheld them close to his lip, without the power of bringing them within his taste; and, like a famished beast, he was ready to fall upon the food of appetite wherever it could be found. But still, cunning —both natural, and that acquired from the ready teacher of all evil to inferior minds, poverty— was at hand to bring certain restraints, which wisdom and virtue were not there to enforce. There was a consciousness in his breast, that too great eagerness often disappoints its own desires, and that he was too eager; and, therefore, he resolved that he would be cautious too. But such resolutions usually fail somewhere; for cautiousness is a guardian who does not always watch, when she is without the companionship of rectitude.

Such reflexions were still busily occupying

his mind ; and he had arrived at sincere regret for the rash and brutal act which he had committed the night before — not because it was evil, but because it was imprudent — when a page opened the door, and ushered Ella Brune into the room.

The poor girl knew not whom she was coming to see : she had taken no note of the face or form of him whose cruel carelessness had deprived her of the only support she had ; she had not listened to the words that passed between him and Richard of Woodville. She stood before him, unconscious that he was the slayer of her old companion. Let the reader mark that fact well. Nevertheless, as soon as she saw him, she turned deadly pale, and her limbs trembled.

But Sir Simeon of Roydon took a smooth and pleasant tone ; and, as soon as the page was gone, and had closed the door, he asked, “ They gave you my message, then, pretty maid ? ” At the same time he placed a stool for her, and motioned her to be seated.

“ They told me, sir,” she answered, in a

low tone, “that you had commands for me from the King.”

“And so I have, fair maiden,” replied Simeon of Roydon; “but, I pray you, sit. This has been a sad event—I grieve for it much. I was not aware, till this morning, that my runaway charger had done such damage.”

“And were you the man?” demanded Ella Brune, suddenly raising her eyes to his face. As she did so, she found him gazing at her from head to foot, taking in all the beauties of her face and form, as an experienced judge remarks the points of a fine horse; and she drew her hood farther over her brow, not well satisfied with the eager and passionate look of admiration which his countenance displayed.

“I was unfortunate enough to be so,” answered Roydon, perceiving her gesture, and thinking it as well to put some little restraint upon himself, though he never dreamed that a poor minstrel’s girl could seriously resist the solicitation of a man of wealth and station. “I regret it deeply,” he continued, “but the brute overpowered me.—By the King’s com-

mands, I bear you fifty half nobles. Here they are: and, for my own satisfaction, I will give you the same."

As he spoke, he held out a purse to her, but Ella Brune drew back. "The King's bounty," she said, "I will receive with gratitude; but, from you, I will take nothing."

"And, pray, why not, sweet girl?" asked Simeon of Roydon; "the King cannot grieve for what has happened half as much as I do, or be half as eager to comfort and console you. Nay, sit down, and speak to me;" and, taking her hand, he led her back to the stool much against her will. "I would fain hear what can be done for you," he added; "I fear you may be friendless and unprotected; and I long to make up to you, as far as possible, for the loss you have sustained."

"I am, indeed, alone in the world," replied the fair girl; "but not friendless, and unprotected, while I trust in God."

"Yes, but God uses human means," answered Roydon, who was every moment growing more eager in the pursuit, which at first had

been but as the chase of a butterfly ; “ and you must let me be his instrument, as I have caused, unwillingly, this evil to befall you. I have a beautiful small cottage on my lands, where the trees fall round and shade it in the winter from the wind — in the summer from the sun. The woodbine and rose gather round the door, and a sparkling stream dances within sight. There, if you will accept such a refuge, you can live in peace and tranquillity, protected from all the harm and wrong that might happen to you in great cities ; for you are too young and too lovely to escape wiles, and perhaps violence, if you are left without good ward, in such resorts of men as these.”

A smile came upon the lip of Ella Brune, but it was of a very mingled and changeful expression. Perhaps the wakening of some old remembered dream of happy days might render it at first soft and gentle ; and, the next instant, the recollection of how that dream had faded might sadden ; and then again the transparency of his baseness mixed a touch of scorn with it, and she answered, “ That can never be,

sir. I seek no protection but that I have, and cannot accept of yours. I am able, as I am accustomed, to guard myself, and will do so still. I think you have mistaken me—but it matters not. I seek neither gold nor favour from you ; and, if you would make atonement for bad deeds, it must be to God, not me.”

As she spoke, she rose, and turned to quit the room ; and Simeon of Roydon hesitated for a moment whether he should not detain her by force—for those were days of violence ; and her very coldness had rendered the passion he began to feel towards her but the more impetuous. He remembered, however, that there might be those who expected her return ; that the place whither she had gone was known at the monastery ; and that the King’s eye might be upon his conduct towards her. These calculations passed like lightning through his mind, and he chose his course in an instant.

“ Stay !” he cried, “ stay one minute more, sweet girl. I have not mistaken you at all. I would not even force my protection on you :

but, at least, receive this ; for I must tell the King that it is paid."

"His bounty," replied Ella, "I will not refuse, as I before said, and offer him my deepest thanks ; but, from you, I will receive nothing."

"Well, then, take these fifty pieces," said her companion ; "they are given by the King's command. We shall meet again, fair maid ; and then, perhaps, you will know me better."

"I seek to know no more," she answered, taking the gold he gave : "I have known enough," and, turning to the door, she left him, murmuring to herself, "would that the King had sent it by other hands."

Simeon of Roydon followed her to the gates, beckoning up two of his servants as he went. "Quick," he whispered ; "you see that girl ? —follow her wherever she goes : find out her name—her dwelling—every particular you can gather, and bring me your tidings with all speed."

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOURS OF JOY.

PROBABLY there is a period in the life of every one—if it be not cut short in very early years, when the blossom is still upon the trees of existence—in which the heart is so depressed by a reiteration of those misfortunes which generally come in groups, that the unexpected announcement of an unnamed visitor, causes us to look up with a feeling of dread, as if some new sorrow were about to be added to the list of those endured. But such was not yet the case with Richard of Woodville, for though many of the events which had lately passed, had tended to make him somewhat more grave and thoughtful than in younger days, yet neither griefs nor anxieties, nor disappointments had been heavy enough to weigh down a spirit naturally

buoyant. His heart might be called light and free; for, though burdened with some cares, and tied by the silver chain of love, yet hope, bright, vigorous, rarely-tiring hope, helped him to carry his load, and the bond between him and sweet Mary Markham, was not one to fetter the energies of his mind, or to dim the brightness of expectation. But above all things his bosom was perfectly free from guile; and in a house so cleanly kept, there is always light, unless every window be closed by the hands of death or of despair.

He looked, therefore, to see who the stranger could be that asked for him, with some curiosity perhaps, but no alarm, and was surprised but well pleased, when the figure of honest Hugh of Clatford darkened the door.

“ Ah, Hugh !” he exclaimed, “ is that you ? What has brought you to Westminster ? Are you also going to seek service in foreign lands ?”

“ Faith, sir, I know not what I am going to do,” replied the good yeoman; “ I came up here with my lord, and wait his pleasure.”

“ With your lord !” exclaimed Woodville,

in astonishment ; “ and what, in the name of fortune and all her freaks, has brought my uncle to Westminster ?—Was he summoned to the coronation ? ”

“ Good truth, noble sir, I know not,” answered Hugh of Clatford. “ He has not told me why he came ; but I chanced to meet your man Hob, and asked him where you were to be found, but to come and see you and how you fared.”

“ Thanks, Hugh, thanks ! ” replied Richard of Woodville.

“ True friend findeth true friend wherever they follow,
And summer’s no summer that wanteth the swallow ; ”

“ but whom has my uncle with him ? ”

He would have fain asked if Mary Markham was near ; but the question would not be spoken, and Hugh of Clatford saved him the trouble of farther enquiry. “ He has brought no one but myself,” he said, “ and Roger Vale, and Martin the henchman, and one or two lads with the horses, and a page, and the Lady Mary— ”

“ Ah ! and is that sweet lady here ? ” asked

Woodville, in as calm and grave a tone as a very joyous heart could use. “But has he not brought my cousin Isabel ?”

“No, good sooth,” rejoined the yeoman ; “he and the Lady Mary came off in haste on the arrival of a messenger from London.”

“That is strange,” said Richard of Woodville ;—but then he thought that, perchance his friend Harry Dacre had sped well in his suit to Isabel, and that the old knight might have left her to cheer him at the hall. Nor was such a course unlikely in that age ; for there were then fewer observances and stiff considerations of propriety than in later days, since rules and regulations more powerful, though but of air, than the locks and eunuchs of an Eastern harem, have tied down the most innocent intercourse of those who love, and every lady in the land is watched with the dragon’s eyes of parental prudence. Love was then looked upon with reverence, and regarded as a safeguard rather than a peril. There was more confidence in virtue, more trust in honour.”

After a short pause, Richard of Woodville

enquired where his uncle was lodged ; and to the great disappointment of his host, who while he was still speaking with Hugh of Clatford, entered to set out the tables for the approaching meal, the young gentleman accompanied the good yeoman, fasting as he was, to visit good Sir Philip Beauchamp—as he said ; but, in truth, to sun himself in Mary's eyes.

Fortune, though she be a spiteful jade, will occasionally favour true lovers ; and she certainly showed herself particularly benign to Richard of Woodville in the present instance. Hurrying on with Hugh of Clatford, he made his way through the crowded streets of Westminster, till, at the outskirts of the town, near where now stands George Street, he reached the gates of a large house in a garden, where Sir Philip Beauchamp had taken up his abode. With all due reverence he asked for his uncle ; but he must not be looked upon as a very undutiful nephew, if we admit that he was not a little rejoiced to find that the good old knight had gone forth, leaving fair Mary Markham behind.

Guided by Hugh of Clatford, who very

well understood all that was passing in the young gentleman's heart, Richard was soon in his fair lady's bower ; and certainly Mary's bright face expressed quite as much pleasure to see him as he could have desired. It expressed surprise also, however ; and after chiding him, not very harshly, for a sweet liberty he took with her arched lips, she exclaimed, “ But how are you here, Richard ? I thought you were firm at Meon, polishing armour and trying horses.”

Now Richard of Woodville, as soon as he heard that Mary was in the same city with himself, had formed his own conclusions in regard to various matters that had puzzled him the day before ; and he answered gaily, “ What, deceiver ! Do you think I do not know your arts ? You would have me believe you were ignorant that I was here, and must tease your poor lover twice in the course of yesterday, by letting him hear your voice, yet hiding the face that he loves best, from his sight ? ”

“ Nay, dear Richard,” replied Mary with a look of still greater surprise than before ;

“you are speaking riddles to me. You could not hear my voice yesterday, at least in Westminster, unless, indeed, it were late at night; and then it must have been in sad dolorous tones; for I was very tired. We did not reach this place till three hours after dark. But what is it you mean, by daring to call Mary a deceiver? when you know right well, I could not cheat you into thinking that I did not love you, though I tried hard to look as demure as a cat in the sunshine?”

“Are you sincere now, Mary? are you telling me the truth?” asked Richard, still half inclined to doubt; but the moment after he added, “Yet I know you are, my Mary without guile. Truth gives you half your beauty, Mary; it lights your eyes, it smiles upon your lips.—Yet this is very strange; and I thought that I had discovered the key to a mystery which must puzzle me still.—But hear what has happened, and you shall judge;” and he proceeded to relate the injunctions which had been twice laid upon him the day before, by some unseen acquaintance in the crowd.

Mary Markham was not less surprised and puzzled than himself, especially as he persisted in asserting the words had been spoken by a female voice. But they soon abandoned that topic to turn to others of deeper interest to their own two hearts: the cause of Sir Philip Beauchamp's journey to the capital, and the future fate of his fair companion.

"In truth, Richard," said Mary in answer to some of his questions, "I am well nigh as ignorant as yourself of what is about to happen. All I know is, that Sir Philip told me, I should, probably, soon see my father again."

"And who is your father, my sweet Mary?" asked Woodville with a smile.

Mary gazed at him for an instant, with a look of touched and gratified affection, and then asked, "And did Richard of Woodville, really seek poor Mary Markham's hand, then, without knowing ought of her state and station? —was he willing to take her dowerless, friendless, stationless, almost nameless?"

"Good faith, dear Mary," answered Woodville, "I should be right glad to take you any

way I could get you ; and if dower, or station, or friends, or ought else stand in the way, even down to this pretty robe whose hem I kiss, I pray you, Mary, cast it off ! I shall be right glad to have you in your kirtle, if it be but of hoddern grey.”

Mary Markham smiled and blushed ; and her bright merry eyes acquired a softer and more glistening light from the dew of happy emotion that spangled her long eyelashes. “ Well, Richard,” she said, “ I do not love you the less for that.—’Tis a bold speech perhaps, and one that I should not make ; but once having owned what I feel, why should I hide it now ?”

“ Fie on those who would blame you, dearest lady,” answered Woodville : “ who should feel shame for love ? The brightest and the best of human feelings, surely is no cause of shame ; but we may all say with the great poet,

“ O sunn’is life ! O Joy ’is daughter dear,
Pleasaunce of love ! O godely debonaire
In gentle hearts aye ready to repaire,
O very cause of health and of gladnesse,
Iheried be thy might and godenesse.”

“I cannot answer why, Richard,” replied Mary; “but I know it is so, that all women feel some shame to own they love; and many affect more shame than they really feel. But I will not do so, dear Richard; for I think it is dishonesty to feign ought. I know I did feel shame, when one day, as we sat beside the river under the green trees, you won me to say more than I ever thought I could; and all that night, when I thought upon it, my cheek burned. But yet, in the moment of trial, I felt bold; and when your uncle asked me, I told him all. Nor do I see why I should conceal it now, even if I could, when you are about to go far, and that may be your only consolation in danger and in difficulty.”

“It will be my strength and my support, dear Mary,” answered Woodville; “and I do think that if I could but win a promise from you to be mine, it would so nerve my heart and arm, in the hour of strife, that all men should own I had won you well—Say, will you promise, my sweet lady?”

“I will promise that I will, if I may,” re-

plied Mary ; “but alas, Richard, the entire fulfilment of that promise must depend upon another. We poor women have but little power, even over our own fate and persons ; but I will love none but you, Richard, wherever I go ; and you will not doubt that love, though it be spoken so freely ?”

“ Nay, heaven forbid !” said Richard of Woodville ; “ and were it not that you are my uncle’s ward, I would put that love, dear Mary, to the proof, by asking you to fly with me and seek out some friendly priest who would bind our fate so fast together, that it would take greater power than any one in the land can boast, to sever it again. But I would not be ungrateful to one who has been a father to me.”

“ Nor must I be ungrateful, either to him, or to my own father, Richard,” replied Mary Markham : “ you would not love me long if I could be so.”

“ I know you cannot, Mary,” answered her lover ; “ but tell me who he is, Mary, that I may try to win him to hear my suit —I knew

not that your father was alive—unless, indeed, the idle gossip—but no more of that. Whoever he be, I will trust to merit his esteem, and surely his daughter's love will be no bad commendation to him. I have hopes, too, of advancement, if ambition be his passion, such, indeed, as I have never had before. The King—he who was with us not a month ago as Hal of Hadnock—”

“Ay, Dacre told us who he was,” cried Mary Markham.

“The King, he shows me great favour,” continued Woodville, “and has given me letters to many at the court of Burgundy, promising to send for me, too, as soon as he has service for me here. With a true heart, and no unpractised hand, I do not fear that I shall fail of winning honour; and though I be but a poor gentleman, yet as I do know that riches or poverty would make no difference in Mary Markham to me, so I cannot believe that it will change me in her eyes.”

“Oh no!” she answered, but then added with a sigh, “but my father, Richard.—It is

long since I have seen him, yet he was kind and noble, just and true, if I remember right. I recollect him well, with his grey hair, changed more by sorrow than time. I thought you knew the whole, for Isabel does; but I promised faithfully not to speak of my fate or his to any one, for reasons that he judged sufficient, when he gave me into good Sir Philip's charge; and I must not break my word even for you, Richard."

"Well, it matters not," answered Woodville; "certainly I would fain know who he is, for then I might court him as a lover does his bride, for Mary's sake; but yet you must keep your promise to him, and to me too; and whenever you are free to speak, you must give me tidings, dear girl; for in all the thousand chances of this world, I might mar my own hopes, even while seeking to fulfil them."

"I will, I will," replied Mary Markham: "but hark! I hear your uncle's step, Richard. I will but add one word more to cheer you. Perhaps, if I judge right, we may not be so long ere we meet again, as you suppose,—and now, God prosper you, my own true squire."

As she spoke the good old knight, Sir Philip Beauchamp, entered the room with a grave and somewhat perplexed air. It soon became evident, however, that whatever annoyed or embarrassed him, it was not the presence of his nephew; for he greeted him kindly, holding out his hand to him, saying, “Ay, you here foolish boy!—still the moth and the candle! But if you needs must love, why, let it lead you to honour and renown. What brought you to London? To buy arms?”

“No, sir, to see the King,” replied his nephew. “He sent me a messenger, bearing letters for me to the court of Burgundy, and gave me to understand that I might come to visit him if I would.”

The old knight, in his meditative mood, seemed to catch some of Woodville’s words and miss the others. “Letters to the court of Burgundy,” he said. “Well, from Harry of England, they should smooth thy path, boy. Would to Heaven, you two were not lovers!—Not that I would speak ill of love; ’tis the duty of every gentleman to vow his service to

some fair lady. At least, as it was so in my young day ; but we have sorely declined since then—sorely, sorely nephew, of mine ; and love was then quite a different affair from now, when it must needs end in marriage, or worse. It was a high and ennobling passion in those times, leading knights and gentlemen to seek praise and do high deeds ; not for their own sakes, but for the honour of the ladies whom they served, nor requiring reward even from them, but for pure and high affection, and the pleasure of exalting them. Thus many a man loved a lady—either placed far above him, or removed from his reach by being wedded to another—without sin, or shame, or presumption ; for love as I have said, was a high and ennobling feeling in those days, which taught men to do what is right, not what is wrong.”

“ Well, my noble uncle,” replied Richard of Woodville, “ and so it may be now ; and it will have the same effect with me. But one thing I do know, that I would rather do high deeds to exalt my own wife, than another man’s : I would rather serve a lady that I may win,

than a lady I have no right to seek. Methinks it is both more honest and more safe ; and by God's blessing I will win her too, if I live long enough and have fair play."

The old knight smiled. "Thou art a jesting coystrel, Dickon," he said ; "and yet not a bad man at arms either. But times are changed I tell thee, and not for the better. Thou thinkest according to the day, and cannot understand the past.—When goest thou over seas, boy?"

"In a few days, sir," answered Richard of Woodville. "I think before a week be out."

Mary Markham's cheek turned a little pale ; and the old knight meditated for a moment or two, after which he asked his nephew when he intended to quit London. Richard replied that he went on the following morning ; and Sir Philip, who had found a sad vacancy in the hall since Richard had left them for a time, and poor Catherine for ever, required that he should stay and keep them company for the rest of the day.

"Heaven knows, my poor Mary," he said

“ how long we may have to remain in this place ; and we shall soon find it dull enough. The people whom I expected to meet, have not yet appeared, and no tidings of them have come ; so we may as well keep this idle boy to make us merry ; and if he must go buy arms or lace jerkins for the court of Burgundy, why we will go with him to Gutherun’s Lane and the Jury ; and you shall ride your white palfrey for once along Cheape, with your gay side-saddle quilted with gold ; though in my young days—before King Richard married Anne of Bohemia—never a lady in the land saw so foolish a contrivance.”

It may well be supposed that neither Mary Markham nor Richard of Woodville was very much averse to such a proposal ; and the rest of the day passed in that April-morn happiness which all must have felt, ere parting with those we love ; when the cloudy thought of the dreary morrow, comes hourly sweeping over the sunshine of the present, yet making the light seem more bright for the passing shadow. More than once, too, the lovers were left for a while alone ; and every moment added to

their sweet store of vows and promises. Much was also told that they had not had time to tell before, though it was still spoken in rambling and unconnected form : the one predominant feeling always intruding, and calling their thoughts and words back to what was passing in their own hearts.

How many bitter moments pay for our sweet ones in this life ; and yet how willing are we all, to make the purchase, whatever be the price ! The ambitious spirit of enjoyment is upon us, and we must still enlarge the sphere of our delight, though—as when a conqueror stretches the bounds of his empire, and thereby only exposes a wider frontier to attack—each new hope, each new pleasure, each new possession, but lays us open to loss, regret, and disappointment. It is a sad view of human life ; but Richard of Woodville and Mary Markham found its truth when they came to feel how much more bitter was their parting, for the few sweet hours of happiness they had enjoyed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WRONG.

THE sun, scarce a hand's breadth above the sky, was nevertheless shining with beams as bright and warm as in the summer, when Richard of Woodville mounted his horse in the courtyard of the inn at Charing, and followed by his two yeomen and his page, rode out, after receiving the valedictory speeches of the host and hostess, who, with a little crowd, composed of drawers and maidens, and some of their other guests, watched his departure, and commented upon his strong yet graceful limbs, and his easy management of his charger, prognosticating that he would prove stout in battle field, and fortunate in hall and bower. Near the fine chaste cross at Charing,—which stood hard by the spot where the grand libel upon

British taste, called Trafalgar Square, now stands—Woodville paused for a moment, and letting his eye run past its grey fretwork, gazed down in the direction of the palace and the abbey, hesitating whether he should take the shorter road by the convent of St. James, or, once more passing through Westminster, ride under the windows of fair Mary Markham, for the chance of one parting glance. I need not tell the reader how the question was decided; but as he turned his horse's head towards the palace, he saw a female figure standing upon the lower step of the cross, with the hood, then usually worn by women when out, drawn far over the face. The beautiful form, however, the small foot and ankle appearing from beneath the short kirtle, and the wild peculiar grace of the attitude, taken together, showed him at once that it was poor Ella Brune; and he was riding forward to speak with her, when she herself advanced and laid her hand upon his horse's neck.

“I have been watching for you, noble sir,” she said, “to bid you adieu before you part,

and to give you thanks from a poor but true heart."

"Nay, you should not have waited here, Ella," he replied; "why did you not come to the inn?"

"I did, yesterday at vespers," answered the girl, "but you were abroad; and the people laughed as if I had done a folly. Your men told me, however, you were going this morning at daybreak, and so I waited here; for I would fain ask you one boon."

"And what is that, Ella?" enquired Woodville; "if it be possible to grant, it shall not be refused; for I have so little to give, that I must be no niggard of what I have."

"You can grant it," replied the girl, with a bright smile; "and you will be a niggard indeed if you do not; for it is what can do you no harm, and may stead me much in case of need. It is but to tell me, whither you go, and when, and how."

"That is easily said, my fair maiden," answered Woodville. "I go first to my own place at Meon; then to the Court of Burgundy,

at the end of six days ; and, as I would not cross through France, I go by sea from Dover to a town called Nieuport, on the coast of Flanders ;—But say, is there ought I can do for you before I send the man I told you of, to give you what little assistance I can ?”

“ Send him not, send him not,” cried the girl ; “ I am now rich—almost too rich, thanks to your generous interference with our good King. He sent me a large sum, by the hands of the bad knight who killed the poor old man.”

“ Ay !” said Richard of Woodville, “ and did you see this Sir Simeon of Roydon, my poor Ella ?—Beware of him ; for he is not one to understand you rightly I fear.”

“ I am aware of him,” answered the minstrel’s girl ; “ and I abhor him. He is a dark fearful man—but no more of that—I shall never see him more I trust, for his eyes chill my blood. He looked at me as I love not men should look—not as you do, kindly and pitifully—but I know not how ; it can be felt, not told.”

“ I understand you, Ella,” replied Richard

of Woodville ; “ and his acts are like his looks. He has made more than one unhappy heart in many a cottage that once was blythe. I grieve the King sent him to you.”

“ Oh, ’twill do no harm,” cried the girl. “ I shall not long be here ; and I know him well. Would that I were not a woman !”

“ What, would you avenge the wrong he did on that sad evening ?” asked Woodville, with a smile to think how feeble that small hand would prove in strife.

“ No, not for that,” she replied ; “ for I would try to forgive—but if I were not what I am, you would take me with you in your train ; and then I should be safe and happy.”

“ I trust you may be so still, even as a woman, poor girl,” answered Richard of Woodville ; and, after a few more words of kindness and comfort, he bade her adieu. Ella Brune’s bright eyes glistened ; and, perhaps, she found it difficult to speak the parting words, for she said no more ; but catching her young protector’s hand, she pressed her lips upon it, and drew back to let him pass.

It was impossible for Richard of Woodville not to feel touched and interested ; but he was not one to mistake her. He knew—not indeed by the hard teaching of experience, but by the intuitive perception of a feeling heart—how the unfortunate cling to those who show them kindness, and could distinguish between the love of gratitude, and that of passion. He had purposely spoken gently and tenderly to her ; and, in proportion as he could do little to afford her substantial aid, had tried to make his words and manner consoling and strengthening—and he thought, “ If any one had acted so to me, I should feel towards him as this poor girl now feels in my case. Heaven guard her, poor thing, for hers is a sad fate !”

In such meditations, he rode on ; but we will not at present follow him on his way, turning rather to poor Ella Brune, who stood by the cross gazing after him, till his horse taking a road to the right, about two hundred yards before it reached the palace gate, was soon hidden by the trees just at the entrance of the town of Westminster.

With a deep sigh, she then bent her steps along the road leading by the bank of the river towards the gate of the Temple, which was still in a somewhat ruinous state from the attack made upon it in 1381. As she went, she looked not at the houses and gardens on either side—she marked not the procession which came forth with cross and banner from the convent on the right, nor the gay train that issued out of the gates of a large embattled house on the left; but separating herself from the people, who turned to gaze or hastened to follow, she made her way on, seeking the little inn where she dwelt.

There were two other persons, however, who followed the same course—men with swords by their side, and bucklers on their shoulder, and a snake embroidered on the mourning habits that they wore. But Ella saw them not; she was too deeply occupied with her own dark thoughts. She seemed alone in the wide world—more alone than ever, since Richard of Woodville had left the capital; and to be so is both sad and perilous. How strange, how

lamentable it is that society, that great wonderful confused institution, springing from man's necessity for mutual aid and support, provides no prop, no stay for those who are left alone in the midst of it ; none to counsel, none to help, none to defend against the worst of all evils, temptation to vice. Of the body it takes some care ; we must not cut, we must not strike the flesh ; we must not enthrall it ; we must not kill. But we may wound, injure, destroy the spirit if we can, even at our pleasure. For substantial things, we multiply regulations, safe-guards, penalties ; for the mind, on which all the rest so much depends, we provide none. The philosophy of legislation has yet a great step to advance—a step perhaps that may never—perhaps that can never—be taken, though of one thing we may be sure, that till the great Euto-pian dream is realized, and either by education or some other means, a safeguard is provided for the minds of men as well as their bodies and their property, all the iron laws that can be enacted, will prove insufficient for the protection of those more tangible things which

we think most easily defended. To regulate and guard the mind, especially in youth, is to turn the river near its source, and to ensure that it shall flow on in peace and bounty to the end ; but to leave it unguided, and yet by law to strive to restrain man's actions, is to put weak floodgates against a torrent that we have suffered to accumulate. But no more of this. Perhaps, what has been already said, is too much, and out of place.

Yet to return, it is strange and sad that society does afford no stay, no support, to those who are left alone in the wide world ; nay more, that to be so left, seems in a great degree to sever the bond between us and society. “ He must have some friends. Let him apply to them,” we are apt to say, whenever one of these solitary ones comes before us, and whether it is advice, assistance, or defence that is needed. “ He must have some friends ! ”—It is a phrase in constant use ; and, in our own hearts, we go on to say, “ if he have not, he must have lost them by his own fault ; ” and yet how many events may deprive man, and much

more frequently woman, of the only friends possessed !

Poor Ella Brune felt that she was indeed alone ; that there was no one to whom she could apply for anything that the heart and spirit of the bereaved and desolate might need. She knew that had she been a leper, or halt, or blind, or fevered, she could have found those who would have tended, cured, supported her ; but there was no comfort, no aid, for her loneliness ; and scorn, or coldness, or selfish passion, or greedy knavery, would have met her, had she asked any one in the wide crowd through which she passed, “ Which way shall I turn my footsteps ? how shall I bend my course through life ? ”

She felt it deeply, bitterly, and, as I have said, walked on full of her own sad thoughts, while the numbers round her grew less and less. At length, in the sort of irregular street that even then began to stretch out from the edge of Farringdon without the walls, into the country towards Charing, she was left with none near her but the two men of whom we have spoken,

and an old woman, walking slowly on before. The men seemed to notice no one, and conversed with each other in an under tone, till in the midst of the high way, a little beyond St. Clement's well, one or two small wooden houses appeared built in the middle of the high road, with the end of a narrow lane leading up to the old Temple in Oldbourne, and the House of the Bishop of Lincoln. There, however, one of them advanced a step, and spoke a word to Ella Brune over her shoulder.

“ Whither away, pretty maiden ?” he said ; “ are you not going to see the batch of country nobles who have come up to do homage ?”

“ I am going home,” answered Ella Brune gravely ; “ and want no company ;” and she hurried her pace to get rid of him. The next instant the other man was by her side, and taking her arm roughly, he said, “ You must come with us first, our lord wishes to speak with you.”

Ella Brune struggled to disengage herself, saying, “ Let me go, sir ; if your lord wishes to speak with me, it must be at some other

time. I have people expecting me hard by,—let me go, I say."

"Ay, we know all about it," rejoined the man, still keeping his hold, and drawing her towards the mouth of the lane. "You live at the Falcon, pretty mistress; but you must go with us first."

The sounds behind her, had caused the old woman to turn round the moment before, and, seeing Ella struggling to free herself from the man who held her, she turned to remonstrate, exclaiming, "What are you about, sirs? Let the young woman go!"

"Get you gone, old beldame!" cried the other man, thrusting her back. What is it to you?" and at the same time he seized Ella by the other arm, and hurried her on in spite of her resistance.

"Beldame, indeed!" exclaimed the old woman, gazing after them; "Marry, thou art not civil. If thou callest me so, I will call thee Davy.* I will see whither they go, however;"

* A common expression of the lower classes of Londoners in old times.

and thus saying, at the utmost speed she could master, she followed the men who were dragging poor Ella Brune along, calling in vain for help, for the houses in that part of the suburb were few, and principally consisted either of the large gothic mansions of the nobility, shut in within their own gates and surrounded by gardens, or the inns of prelates, isolated in the same manner. Whither they were dragging her, the old woman could not divine ; for she thought it unlikely that any of the persons who dwelt in that neighbourhood would sanction such a violent act. Ella herself, however, knew right well, for she had taken the same road the day before on her brief visit to Sir Simeon of Roydon. Peril and wandering, and sad chances of various kinds, such as seldom are the lot of one so young, had taught her to remark every particular that passed before her eyes with a precision which fixed things in her memory that might have escaped the sight of others ; and she had seen the snake embroidered on the breast and back of the knight's servants, and recog-

nised the badge instantly on those who held her.

As she expected, the men stopped at the gates of the house which were open, and dragged her into the court; but her cries and her resistance ceased the moment she had reached that place, for she knew that they were both in vain, and made up her mind from that moment to the course which she had to pursue.

“ Ha, ha ! pretty maiden,” said the man who had first spoken to her. “ You are now willing to go, are you ? Our lord is not lightly to be refused a visit from any fair dame.—Come, come, I can manage her now, Pilcher ; you stay at the foot of the stairs. Will you come willingly, girl, or must we carry you ?”

“ I will come,” answered Ella Brune ; “ not willingly, but because I must ;” and, with the man still holding her by the arm, she mounted one of the flights of stairs which led straight from the court yard to the rooms above. Following a long corridor or gallery, lighted by a large window at the end, the man led her from the top of the stairs towards the back part

of the house, and, opening a door on the right, bade her go in. After one hasty glance around, which showed her that it was vacant, she entered the small cabinet which was before her ; and the door was immediately shut and locked. She now found herself in a dark and gloomy chamber, which probably had been originally intended either for secret conferences, or for a place of meditation and prayer, where the eye could not distract the mind by catching any of the objects without ; for the only window which it possessed was so high up in the wall, that the sill was above the eyes of any person of ordinary height. There was but one door too —that by which she had entered, and the whole of the walls of the room was covered with black oak, of which also the beams overhead were formed. A few chairs and a small table composed the only furniture which it contained ; and Ella paused in the midst, leaning upon the table in deep thought. Her mind, indeed, was bent only on one point. What were the purposes of Sir Simeon of Roydon, she did not even ask herself ; for she knew right well that

they were evil. Nor did she consider what she should answer, or how she should act ; for a strong and resolute mind judges and decides with a rapidity marvellous in the eyes of the slow and hesitating ; and her determination was already formed. Her only enquiry was, what were the means of escape from the chamber in which she had been placed, what was its position in regard to the apartments which she had visited on the previous day, and which had appeared to be those usually occupied by Roydon himself.

After thinking for some moments, and retracing with the aid of memory every step she had taken in the house, both on that morning and the day before, she judged, and judged rightly, that the chamber in which she had seen the knight, must join that in which she now stood, though she had reached it by another entrance. The sound of voices, which she soon after heard speaking in a different direction from the gallery, confirmed her in that belief ; for, though she could not distinguish any of the words, she felt convinced that the tones were those of Sir

Simeon of Roydon and of the man who had brought her thither.

At length the speakers ceased, a door opened and shut, and then the key was turned in the lock of that which gave entrance to the room where she was confined. As she expected, the next moment Simeon of Roydon stood before her, bearing a sort of laughing triumph in his face, which only increased her abhorrence. He was advancing quickly, as if to take her hand; but she drew back with her eyes fixed upon him, saying, "Come not too near, sir. I am somewhat dangerous at times, when I am offended."

"Why, what folly is this, my sweet Ella!" said the knight, "my people tell me that you have resisted like a young wolf."

"You may find me more of a wolf than you suppose," replied Ella Brune coldly.

"Nay," answered Sir Simeon, "we have ways of taming wolves;—but I seek nothing but your good and happiness, foolish girl. Is it not much better for you to live in comfort and luxury, with rich garments, and dainty

food, and glowing wine, to lie soft, and have no task, but to sing and play and please yourself, than to wander about over the wide world, the sport of 'prentices, or the companion of ruffians?"

"There are ruffians in all stations," rejoined Ella Brune; "else had I not been here."

The cheek of the knight glowed with an angry spot; but then again he laughed the moment after, in a tone more of mockery than of merriment, saying, "We will tame thee, pretty wolf, we will tame thee. Thou shovest thy white teeth; but thou wilt not bite."

"Be not sure of that," answered Ella Brune. "I know well how to defend myself should need be, and have done so before now."

"Well, we will see," replied Sir Simeon; "it takes some time to break a horse or hound, or train a hawk; and you shall have space allowed you. All soft and kindly entertainment shall you have. With me shall you eat and drink and talk and sing, if you will. You shall have courtship like a lady of the land, to try whether gentle means will do. But mark me,

pretty Ella, if they will not we must try others. I am resolved that you shall be mine by force, if not by kindness."

" You dare not use it," answered Ella Brune.

" And why not?" demanded the knight, with a haughty smile. " I have done more daring things than vanquish a coy maiden."

" I know you have," said Ella Brune, in a grave and fearless tone; " but I will tell you, why not. First because, whatever be your care, it would come to the King's ears, and you would pay for it with your head. Next, because I carry about me wherewithal to defend myself;" and putting her hand into her bosom, she drew forth a small short broad-bladed knife in a silver case. " This is my only friend left me here," she continued, " and you may think perchance, most gallant knight and warrior upon women, that this, in so weak a hand as mine, is no very frightful weapon. But let me tell you, that it was tempered in distant lands. Ay, and anointed too; and you had better far give your heart to the bite of the most poisonous snake that crawls the val-

ley of Egypt, than receive the lightest scratch from this. The hilt is always at hand; so beware!"

"Oh! we have antidotes," replied the knight; "antidotes for everything but love, sweet maid: and I swear, by your own bright eyes, that you shall be mine—so 'tis vain to resist. You shall have three days of tenderness; and then I may take a different tone."

As he spoke, some one knocked for the second time: the first had been unheeded. The knight turned to the door and opened it, demanding impatiently, "What is it?"

"The Lord Combe and Sir Harry Alsover are in the court, desiring to speak with you," replied the servant who appeared.

"Well, take them up to the other chamber," answered the knight; and, without saying more to his fair captive, he quitted the room, and once more locked the door.

The moment he was in the corridor, however, he stopped, saying, in a meditative tone, "Stay, Easton." He hesitated for an instant, asking himself whether it were worth his while

to pursue this course any farther, for a low minstrel girl, against such unexpected resistance.

The hand of heaven, almost always, in its great mercy, casts obstacles in the way of the gratification of our baser passions, which give us time for thought and for repentance ; so that, in almost every case, if we commit sin or crime, it is with the perverse determination of conquering both impediments and conviction. Conscience is seldom, if ever, left unaided by circumstances. But the wicked find, in those very circumstances which oppose their course, motives for pursuing it more fiercely.

“ No ! ” said Sir Simeon of Roydon to himself. “ By — ! she shall not conquer me ! — Tell the King ? — She shall never have the means ; for I will either tame her, till she be but my bird to sing what note I please, or I will silence her tongue effectually. To be conquered by a woman ! — No, no ! She is very lovely ; and her very lion look is worth all the soft simpering smiles on earth. — Hark

ye, Easton: there is a druggist, down by the Vintry, with whom I have had some dealings in days of yore. This girl has a poisoned dagger about her, which must be got from her. 'Tis a marvel she used it not on you, as you brought her along, for she drew it forth on me but now. The man's name is Tyler; and he would sell his soul for gold. Tell him that I have need of some cunning drug to make men sleep—to sleep, I say—understand me, not to die: to sleep so sound, however, that a light touch, or a low tone, would not awaken them. It must have as little taste as may be, that we may put it in her drink, or in her food; and then, while she sleeps, we'll draw the lion's teeth.—He will give you anything for a noble;" and, after these innocent directions, the knight betook himself to the chamber whither he had directed his friends to be brought, and was soon in full tide of laughter and merriment at all the idle stories of the Court.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REMEDY.

NEARLY opposite to the old half ruined gate of the Temple, there commenced, in the days I speak of, a very narrow lane which wound up northward till it joined the place now called Holborn, passing in its course, under the walls of the inn, or house, of the Bishop of Lincoln, round his garden wall, and through the grounds of the old Temple house, inhabited by the Knights Templars, before they built a dwelling for themselves by the banks of the Thames. This Temple house, still called the Old Temple in the reign of Henry V., had been abandoned by the brethren in the year 1184, or there about. For some time it was used, to lodge any of the fraternity who might visit England from foreign countries, when

the new building was too full to afford them accommodation ; but gradually this custom ceased, even before the suppression of the order, and at its dissolution the Old Temple fell into sore decay. When the lands of the Templars were afterwards granted to the Knights of St. John, certain portions of the building, and several of the out-buildings were granted by them to various artizans, who found it more convenient to carry on their several pursuits beyond the actual precincts of the City of London. One large antique gate, of heavy architecture, with immense walls, and with rooms in either of the two towers which flanked the lane I have mentioned, was tenanted by an armourer, who had erected his stithy behind, and who stored his various completed arms in the chamber on the right of the gate, where the porter had formerly lodged. Over the window of this room was suspended, under a rude penthouse of straw to keep it from the rain, a huge casque, indicative of the tenant's profession ; and, at about eight o'clock of the same morning on which Richard of Woodville

quitted London, a little cavalcade, consisting of a tall gaunt old man on a strong black horse, a young lady on a white genet, and three stout yeomen, rode slowly up to the gate-house and drew their bridles there, pausing to gaze for a moment or two through the deep arch at the forge beyond, where the flame glowed and the anvil rang, throwing a red glare into the shadowy doorway and drowning the sound of the horses' feet.

“ Halloo ! Launcelot Plasse ! ” cried old Sir Philip Beauchamp, in as loud a tone as he thought needful to call the attention of the person he wanted ; “ halloo ! ”

But the cyclops within went on with their hammering ; and after another ineffectual effort to make them hear, the good knight called up his men to hold the horses, and lifting Mary Markham as lightly to the ground as if she had been but the weight of a feather, he said, “ We must go in and bellow in this deaf man’s ear, till we outdo his own noise. Stay here, Mary, I will rouse him ; ” and, advancing through the open gate, he seized the bare arm of the

armourer, exclaiming, “ What, Launcelot ! would’st thou brain me ?—Why, how now, man, has the roaring of thine own forge deafened thee ?”

The elderly white-headed man to whom he spoke, turned round and gazed at him, leaning his strong muscular arm upon his hammer, and wiping the drops from his brow. “ By St. Jude !” he cried, after a moment’s consideration, “ I think it is Sir Philip Beauchamp. Yet your head is as white as the ashes, and when I knew him it was a grizzled black, like pauldrons traced with silver lines ; and you are mighty thin and bony, for stout Sir Philip, whose right hand would have knocked down an ox !”

“ Fifteen years, Launcelot ! fifteen years,” answered the knight ; “ they bend a stout frame, as thou beatest out a bit of iron ; and, if my head be white, thy black hairs are more easy to be counted than found. Yet both our arms might do some service in their own way yet.”

“ Well, I am glad to see you again, noble

knight," replied the armourer, "though I thought that it would be no more, before you and I went our ways to dust. But, what lack you? There must be some wars toward, to bring an old knight to the stithy; for well I wot, you are not going to buy a tilting suit, or do battle for a fair lady.—God send us some good wholesome wars right soon! We have had nothing lately, but the emprise of the Duke of Clarence. King Harry the fourth got tired of his armour; pray Heaven, his son love the weight better, or I must let the forge cool, and that were a shame."

"Nay, 'tis not for myself," replied Sir Philip. "I have more arms, Launcelot, than ever I shall don in life again. My next suit—unless the King make haste—will be in the chancel of the church at Abbot's Ann. What I want is for my nephew, Dickon of Woodville; he is going to foreign lands in search of renown; and I would fain choose him a suit myself, for you know I am somewhat of a judge in steel."

"You were always accounted so, noble sir,"

replied the armourer, with a grave and important face ; “ and, if you had not been a knight, might have taken my trade out of my hands. But whither does Childe Richard go ? We must know that, for every land has its own arms ; and it would not do to give him for Italy, what is good for France, nor for Palestine what would suit Italy.”

The old knight informed him that his nephew was first to visit Burgundy ; and the armourer exclaimed with a well satisfied air, “ Then I can provide him to a point ; for I have Burgundian arms all ready, even to flaming swords, if he must have them ; but 'tis a foolish and fanciful weapon, far less serviceable than the good straight edge and point. But come, Sir Philip, let us go into the armoury. 'Tis well nigh crammed full, for gentlemen buy little ; and yet I go on hammering with my men, till I have put all the money that I got in the wars, into arms.”

Thus saying, he covered himself with the leatherne jerkin which he had cast off while at work, and returned with his old acquaint-

ance to the room in which the various pieces of armour that he kept ready, were preserved. Sir Philip called Mary Markham to assist in the choice ; but it soon became evident to both, that no selection could be made in good Launcelot Plasse's armoury ; for not only was the room, to their eyes, as dark as the pit of Acheron, but the armour was piled up in such confused heaps, that it was hardly possible to take a step therein, without stumbling over breast-plate or bascinet, pauldrons or brassières.

“ Fie, Launcelot, fie ! ” cried Sir Philip, “ this is a sad deranged show. Why, a stout man-at-arms always keeps his armour in array.”

“ When he has room and time, Sir Philip,” answered the man ; “ but here I have neither. However, you and the fair lady, go forth under the arch, and I will bring you out what is wanted. Here, knave Martin,” he continued, calling one of his men from the forge, “ bring out the great bench, and set it under the gate quick ! —What is your nephew’s height, Sir, Philip ? ”

“ What my own used to be,” replied the

old knight ; “ Six feet and half an inch ; and there is his measure round the waist.”

The bench was soon brought forward, being nothing else than a large solid table of some six inches thick ; and by it Sir Philip Beauchamp and fair Mary Markham took their station, while Launcelot Plasse, with the aid of one of his men, dug out from the piles within, various pieces of armour which he thought might suit the taste of his old customer, laying them down at the door to be brought forward as required. The first article, however, that he carried to the bench, was a cuirass of one piece, evidently old ; for not only was it somewhat rusty about the angles, but in the centre there was a large rough-edged hole.

“ Why, what is this ?” exclaimed Sir Philip, “ this will never do—”

“ Nay, it has done, and left undone enough,” replied the armourer. “ I brought it but to show you. In that placate was killed Harry Hotspur. I do not say that was the hole that let death in ; for men aver that it was a stab in the throat with a coustel when he was down

that slew him ; but the blow that made *that* bore him to the ground, otherwise Shrewsbury field might have gone differently. Now I will fetch the rest.—You see, fairest lady, what gentlemen undergo for the love of praise, and your bright eyes.”

Thus saying, he took back the breast-plate and brought forward, supported on his arm, one of the bascinets or casques worn in the field which were lighter and considerably smaller than the jousting helmets. It was of a round or globular shape, with a small elevation at the top, in which to fix the feathers then usually displayed ; and on the forehead was a plate or band of white enamel, inscribed with the words, “ Ave, Maria.” Sir Philip Beauchamp made some objections to the form ; but Mary Markham, after she had read the inscription, pronounced in favour of the bascinet ; and the armourer himself had so much to say of its defensive qualities, of the excellent invention of making the ventaille rise by plates from below, and of the temper of the steel, that Sir Philip, after having examined it minutely, waived his

objections. The price being fixed, the body armour to match was brought forward, piece by piece, and laid upon the bench. It was of complete plate, as was now the custom of the day, but yet many pieces of the old chain hauberk were retained to cover the joinings of the different parts. Thus beneath the gorget, or camail, which covered the throat, was a sort of tippet formed of interlaced rings of steel, to hang down over the cuirass and afford additional protection ; while at the same time from the tassetts which terminated the cuirass, hung a broad-edge of the same, to complete their junction with the cuissards, or thigh pieces.

This arrangement pleased the old knight very much ; for it was a remnant of the customs of ancient times, when he himself was young, and which totally disappeared before many years were over ; but with the cuirass, he quarrelled very much, exclaiming, “ What, will men never have done with their idle fancies ? ” Tis bad enough to divide the breast-plate into two, and hang the lower part to the upper by that red strad and buckle ; but what is the use of

sticking out the breast, like that of a fat-cropped pigeon?"

"It gives greater use to the arms, noble sir," replied Launcelot Plasse, "and turns a lance much easier from being quite round. Besides, it is the fashion of the court of Burgundy; and no noble gentleman could appear there well without. The palettes, too, you see, are shaped like a fan, and gilt with quaint figures at the corners. It cost me nine days to make these palettes alone and the genouillères which have the same work upon them. Then the pauldrons—see how they are artfully turned over at the top of the shoulder with a gilt bordure."

"And pray, what may that be for?" demanded the old knight; "we had no such tricks in my days to make a man look like a cray-fish."

"That is to give the arm fuller sweep and sway, either with axe or sword," answered the armourer. "You can thus raise your hand quite up to your very crest, which you could never do before, since pauldrons were invented."

“ We used to give good stout strokes in the year eighty,” rejoined Sir Philip Beauchamp, “ as you well know, Master Launcelot. But boys must have boys’ things—so let it pass; but, what between one piece and another, it will take a man an hour to get into his harness, with all these buckles and straps. But I will tell you what, Master Launcelot, I will have no tuilles over the cuissards; they were a barbarous and unnatural custom, and very inconvenient too. I was once nearly thrown to the ground in Gascony, by the point catching the saddle as I mounted.”

“ Oh! they are quite gone out of use,” replied the armourer; “ and we now either make the tassets long, or add a guipon of mail, coming down to the thighs.”

The jambes or steel boots, the sollerets or coverings for the feet, the brassards, gauntlets, and vambraces were then discussed and purchased, not without some chaffering on the part of the old knight, who was a connoisseur in the price as well as in the fashion of armour; but Launcelot Plasse had so much to

say in favour of his commodities, that he obtained very nearly the sum he demanded.

He then proceeded to prove to Sir Philip Beauchamp, that the suit would not be complete without the testière, the chanfron, and the manefaire and poitral of the horse to correspond ; and, though his customer was not inclined to spend any more money, yet a soft word or two from Mary Markham won the day for the armourer, and he was directed to bring forth the horse armour for inspection.

While he and his men were busy fulfilling this command, the old knight turned, hearing some one speaking eagerly, and apparently imploringly, to his attendants ; and, seeing an old woman poorly dressed conversing with them, he enquired, “ What does the woman want, Hugh ? ”

“ Ah ! noble sir,” replied the old dame, “ if you would but interfere, it might save sin and wrong. I have just seen a poor girl dragged away by two men up to a house in the lane, called Burwash-house, where they have taken her in against her will.”

“ Ha ! ” cried Sir Philip Beauchamp ; “ why, he is an old and reverend man, my good Lord of Burwash, and will not suffer such things in his mansion. I will send up one of the men to tell him.”

“ The noble lord is not there, fair sir,” replied the woman ; “ but he has lent his house to some gay knight, whose men do what they please with the poor people. ’Tis but yesterday my own child was struck by one of them.”

“ If there be wrong done, you must go to the officers of the duchy, good woman,” answered the knight, whose blood was cold with age, and who could be prudent till he was chafed. “ I will send one of the yeomen with you, to get you a hearing. These things should be amended ; but when Kings’ sons will beat the citizens, and brawl in Cheape, there is no great hope.”

“ Good faith, Sir Philip ! ” cried the armourer, who had just come forth, bearing the manefaire upon his arm, “ if it be the Duke of Clarence you speak of, and his brother John, ’twas they got beaten, and did not beat. We

Londoners are sturdy knaves, and take not drubbings patiently, whether from lord or prince."

"And you are right, too," replied the old knight; "men are not made to be the sport of other men. But what's to be done about this girl, Launcelot? You know the customs here better than I do. The good woman says they have carried a girl off against her will to Burwash-house here, hard by."

"Why, that's the back of it," cried Launcelet Plasse. "The old lord is not there, but in his stead one Sir Simeon of Roydon, who, if I mistake not, will never win much renown by stroke of lance.—Wait a minute, my good woman, till I have sold my goods, and then I and my men will go up with you, and set the girl free, or it shall go hard, if you are certain she was taken against her will?"

"She shrieked loud enough to make you all hear," replied the old woman.

"I thought there was a noise when we were hammering at the back piece," observed one of the men.

“I heard nothing,” said Launcloot Plasse.

“Oh, go at once, go at once,” cried Mary Markham; “you know not how she may be treated. We can wait till you return. Send the men with them, dear Sir Philip.”

“I will go myself, Mary,” replied the knight. “Come along, my men, leave one with the horses, and the rest follow.”

“I am with you, Sir Philip,” cried the armourer. “Bring your hammers, lads, we will make short work of oaken doors.”

But ere Sir Philip Beauchamp had taken two steps up the lane, the casement of a large window in the house which had been pointed out, was thrown suddenly open, and a woman’s head appeared. The sill of the window was some twelve or fourteen feet from the ground; but to the surprise of all, without seeming to pause for a moment, the girl whom they beheld, set her foot upon it, caught the iron bar which ran down the middle of the casement, seemed to twist something round it, and then suffered herself to drop, hanging by her hands, first from the bar, and then from a scarf.

She was still some five or six feet from the ground, however ; and Mary Markham, who had been watching eagerly, clasped her hands and turned away her head. Sir Philip Beauchamp, and the men who accompanied him paused, and they could hear a voice from within exclaim, “Follow her like light, by the back door ! She will to the King, and that were ruin.—What fear you, fool !—She has broken the dagger in the lock, do you not see ?”

As he spoke the girl, after a momentary hesitation, during which she hung suspended by the hands, wavering with the motion which she had given herself in dropping from above, let go her hold, and sank to the ground. Fortunately the lane was soft and sandy ; and she fell light, coming down indeed, upon one knee, but instantly starting up again unhurt.

She then gazed wildly round her for an instant, and put her hand to her head, as if asking herself whither she should fly ; but the sight of the old knight and his companions, and the sound of an opening door on the other side, brought her indecision quickly to an end, and

running rapidly forward she cast herself at Sir Philip Beauchamp's feet, embracing his knee, and crying, "Save me, save me, noble sir!"

At the moment she reached the good old man, two stout fellows who had rushed from a door in the wall and followed her at full speed, were within two paces of her ; and one of them caught her by the arm, even at the knight's feet, as he was in the act of commanding him to keep aloof.

"Stand back, fellow," thundered Sir Philip Beauchamp, with the blood coming up into his withered cheek ; and the next moment, in the midst of an insolent reply, he struck the knave in the face with his clenched fist, knocking him backwards all bloody on the ground.

The other man, who had more than once accompanied Sir Simeon of Roydon to Dunbury, and recognised its lord, slunk back to the house, stopped some others who were following, and then hastened in, to tell his master, in whom Ella Brune had found a protector.

The man who had been knocked down, rose, gazed fiercely at the knight, and then

looked behind him for support; but seeing his companions retreating, he too retraced his steps, not without muttering some threats of vengeance; while the old armourer cried after him, "Never show your faces again in the lane, knaves, or we will hide you back like hounds, or pound you like strayed swine."

In the meanwhile Sir Philip had raised up the poor girl; and Mary Markham was soothing her tenderly, as Ella, finding herself safe, gave way to the tears which her strong resolution had repressed in the actual moment of difficulty and danger.

"Come, come, do not weep, poor thing," said the knight, laying his large bony hand upon her shoulder. "We will take care of you. Who is it that has done this?"

"A bad man, called Simeon of Roydon," replied Ella Brune, wiping away the tears.

"We know him," said Mary Markham in a kindly tone; "and do not love him, my poor girl."

"And I have cause to love him less, noble lady," replied Ella Brune, waving her head

mournfully. 'Tis but two nights ago he killed the last friend I had ; and now, he would have wronged me shamefully."

"Killed him!" exclaimed Mary, "what! murdered him?"

"'Twas the same as murder," replied the girl ; "he rode him down in a mad frolic—a poor blind man. He is not yet in his grave."

"Come, come—be comforted," said Sir Philip. "Let us hear how all this chanced."

"We will be your friends, poor girl," added Mary Markham ; and then, turning to the old knight, she asked in a low tone, "can we not take her home with us?"

Sir Philip gazed at the minstrel's girl from head to foot, and then shrugged his shoulders slightly with a significant look, as he remarked her somewhat singular dress.

"Nay, nay," said Mary Markham in the same low tone ; "do not let that stop you, noble friend. There may be some good amongst even them."

"Well, be it as you will, Mary," answered the old knight ; "she must be better than

she looks, to do as she has done. Come, poor thing—you shall go home with us, and there tell us more. Wait till I have finished the purchase of this harness, and we will go along back to Westminster; though how to take you through the streets in that guise, I do not well know."

"Get a boat, sir, at a landing by the Temple," said Launcelot Plasse, "and send the horses by land."

"A good thought," replied the knight; and thus it was arranged, the whole party returning to the armourer's shop, and thence, after the bargain was made and all directions were given, proceeding to the water-side, where a boat was soon procured, which bore them speedily to the landing-place at Westminster.

LONDON:

Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLEY,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

AGINCOURT.

G. P. R. JAMES, Esq.

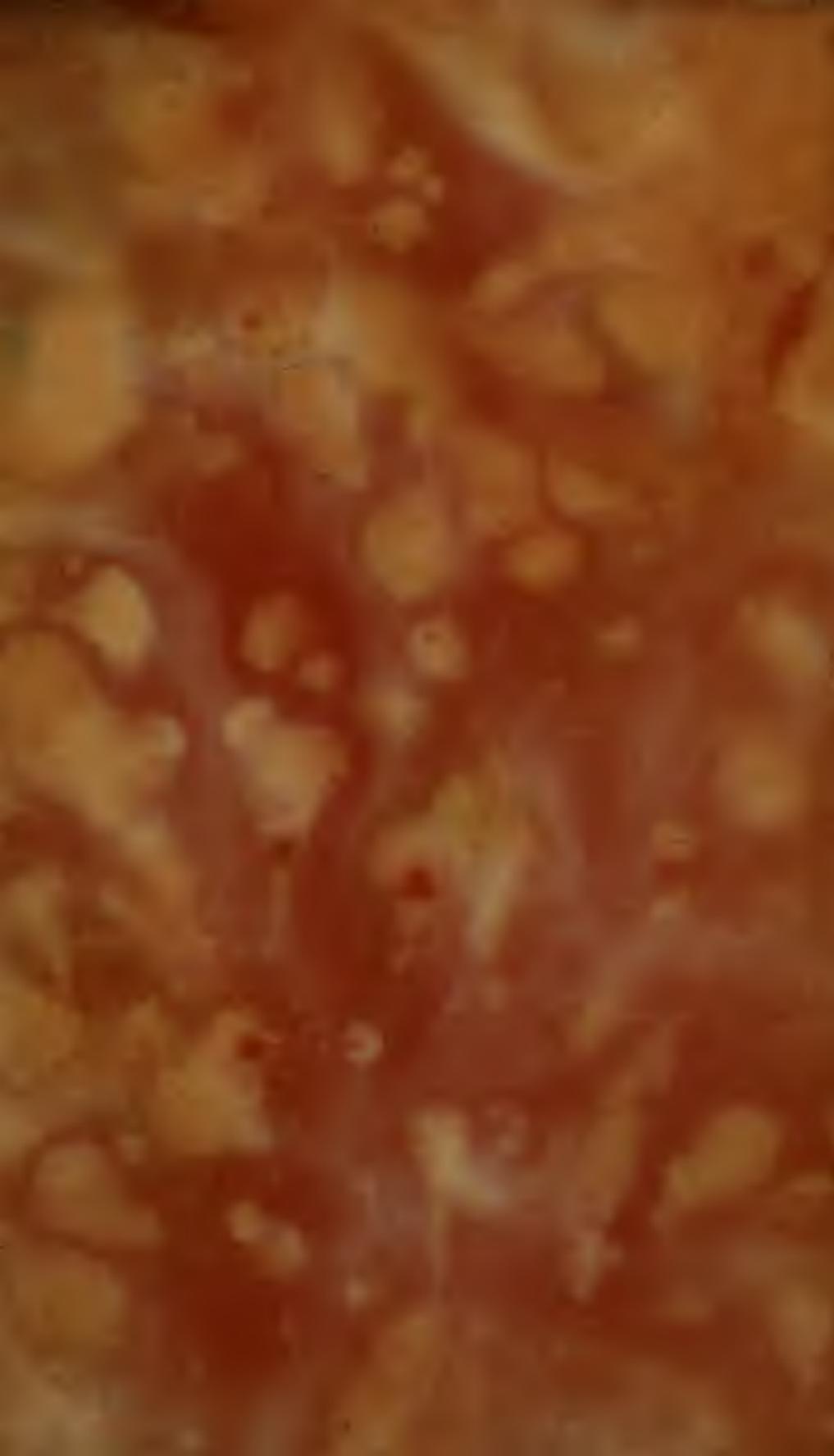
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